



신의 노래

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8 완결



주|라온 E&M

SONG OF GOD

- 신의 노래 -

- VOLUME 5 -

-AUTHOR-

San Kyung

Chapter 162

Patrick Quinn put his hand on Jun Hyuk's shoulder and spoke to the orchestra.

"My fellows, he has finally arrived. The fiend who has made you all suffer through nightmares. Ha ha."

After Patrick Quinn's playful introduction, Jun Hyuk bowed his head.

It did not feel like the orchestra members were completely welcoming Jun Hyuk's presence. It is not because he is young. It is not rare for them to have visiting conductors in their twenties.

Their expressions are a mix of anticipation and concern. They already know the personality of the song well. Opening the door to another type of music is worthy of receiving rave reviews. However, they seemed to already be thinking that playing the song or holding a concert is impossible. If it had been a song that was possible to play by having the composer show up, they would have put it in the concert repertoire already.

Jun Hyuk took in these looks and greeted each member.

"This is Matthew Price, the best violinist and our bandmaster."

Matthew Price took Jun Hyuk's hand and greeted him in a friendly manner.

"Maestro Jun. Hopefully, you'll be able to take us out of this nightmare? Or are you going to completely push us into hell? Ho ho."

Matthew Price is in his fifties with sparse white hair. Though he is not selected as a top class violinist, he is a performer who could stand on any stage as a soloist.

He joked to Jun Hyuk, but more than half of it was sincere.

"I'm not sure. Isn't it just a sound? My thoughts are that you shouldn't put too much meaning to it."

Matthew Price did not show a particular reaction to Jun Hyuk's response. He could guess how Jun Hyuk thinks of his own music when he said, 'just a sound'.

When his first meeting with the orchestra was over, Tara approached him.

"Maestro, let's end your meeting here since they're in the middle of rehearsal. There is another person waiting for you."

Jun Hyuk realized that they were in the middle of rehearsal.

"Maestro Quinn, I interfered. Then."

"No it's fine. Anyway, let's meet in the evening again to catch up. Okay?"

"Yes, Maestro."

Jun Hyuk was led by Tara again to leave. Tara led him to a well presented office that did not look flashy or cheap.

There is a nameplate for Board Chairman Mark Boff on the door.

Board Chairman Mark Boff has been on the Board of Directors for 20 years, and he is the person who made the Boston Philharmonic into the pride of the Northeast after rival New York Philharmonic started slowing down in the 1980s. Even though he is about to be 70, he still looks healthy as he is a fan of exercise.

He has a close relationship with New England Conservatory (NEC) In particular, and has made tremendous investments in music education making it easy for him to recruit high level musicians.

He is one of the people who frequents the temporary orchestra 'Boston Pops Orchestra,' consisting of many of the orchestra members in the off-season. They do not perform heavy symphonies, but rather arrangements of music like light classic props, rock, and jazz. They also brought in a good amount of profit by participating in film music.

It is not an exaggeration to say that he is the actual head of the Boston Philharmonic.

"Maestro Jun, we finally meet. Welcome. I heard you overturned the world and then went traveling by yourself?"

Mark Boff, who looked too healthy to be 70, lightly embraced Jun Hyuk.

“Mr. Chairman. Please don’t use the title Maestro. Just call me Jun.”

Jun Hyuk felt extremely awkward with everyone calling him Maestro.

“Hm..... Maestro Jun. You’ll need to start getting used to it. Starting today, more people are going to call you Maestro than they call you by your name. Until you retire I mean. And don’t call me Chairman. Just call me Mark.”

Mark Boff asked Jun Hyuk about Salzburg and his travels, and then brought up the most important question in regards as to why he brought him here.

“What do you think? Do you think it’ll be possible?”

It is a question that Jun Hyuk could figure out without an explanation.

“I don’t know. I have nothing to tell you since it isn’t something that I’ve tried before.”

“Most conductors in the world have made attempts at least once, but it’s a bit funny for the composer to be keeping his hands off of it. Goodness.”

Mark Boff looked at him with disbelief.

“I hope your stay in Boston will be a comfortable one.”

Jun Hyuk brought up the one condition that he had.

“If I am to be comfortable, I wish you wouldn’t make it known that I’ve come to Boston. I don’t really like to have the press and reporters around.”

“But that’s something you’ll need to get used to as well. Becoming famous means losing that much privacy. You can think of it as an exchange. And it’s already a situation where I can’t do that favor for you. Articles on the concert are going out tomorrow morning. We already sent out the press release. The news of your recruitment will also be going up on our website homepage.”

Mark Boff shook his head indicating that there is no chance. It is also a piece of advice that it is something he cannot do anything about as long as he has stepped out into the world.

“Then the reporters will come swarming to the hotel.”

“They won’t go up to your room, but they’ll be camping out in the lobby. What can you do but put up with it? Thinking that you’ll have concerts and albums but not have your privacy infringed upon is only a dream for musicians. It’s impossible. Just ignore it. Tara will take care of handling the reporters. Don’t worry since she’s a veteran.”

“Alright.”

“Go to the hotel and get a lot of rest until tonight. You’re going to have to have dinner with the Board members.”

Even though it is the first time he is hearing about this dinner, Jun Hyuk did not say anything. It is just a step in getting used to this world. He needs to accept it.

“Tara, take him to the hotel.”

“Yes.”



The suite on the 23rd floor of the Plaza Hotel is separated into a living room and bedroom. The living room looked full because it holds a grand piano. It is not a royal suite that goes for tens of thousands of dollars a night, but it is plenty large for a guest room that he will be using alone.

“What do you think? Do you like it? If you find anything uncomfortable, I can look into another room.”

“No, this is plenty. It’s fine.”

“Then I’ll come to get you for dinner at 6:30. If you need anything, let me know at any time.”

When Tara closed the door and left, Jun Hyuk threw his body on the bed and could only sigh at the thought that this stiff lifestyle would continue.

He needs to make calls first. Since the press release would be going out tomorrow, he needs to let everyone know because they see the articles and make a fuss. He will need

to start with his lawyer, who may have already received a contract in the mail.

“Lawyer Lim. It’s me, Jun Hyuk.”

“Goodness, Jun Hyuk. Where are you? Are you still traveling in Europe?”

“No. I’m in Boston right now.”

“Boston? Why? You’re traveling America instead of Europe?”

“No. I became the visiting conductor of the Boston Philharmonic. The people here said...”

“What? Visiting conductor of Boston? Goodness! You made such a fuss just 2 months ago and now conducting? Who are you?”

Chapter 163

Lim So Mi's startled voice rang over the phone. She does not have a lot of interest in music, but she investigated things like record labels, the music market, and the world of classical music while taking on Jun Hyuk as a client and came to understand the scale and social status.

She knows that a visiting conductor, and of one of the top 5 orchestras in the U.S. at that, is capable of immediately becoming the principal conductor of most orchestras.

"It turned out like that. Anyway, they said they'll be sending the contract over soon so I just wanted to let you know."

"Hm. What do you want me to do?"

"Excuse me?"

"The contract. You want me to make it tight? Or do you want to do it loosely?"

"Ah, pass on whatever you can. Just try to avoid meetings with reporters as much as you can."

"Alright. Let's see. Once this gets out, will I be holding a press conference again?"

He could tell by her voice that she does not dislike doing the press conferences. She could even be looking forward to it a bit from the slight excitement in her voice.

"Ha ha. There won't be any reason for that. There's a separate spokesperson for Boston Philharmonic."

"Is that so?"

"You sound regretful."

"Of course. I look pretty good on camera. Ho ho."

Lawyer Lim So Mi put her regrets aside and he called Yoon Kwang Hun about this.

“Sir. Are you still in the countryside?”

“No, I already came back. It’s been a while since everything quieted down.”

The articles about Jun Hyuk after the events of Europe settled after just 2 weeks. Yoon Kwang Hun stayed at a pension on the west coast for a while and came back to his daily life when a cafe employee called him saying that the reporters had stopped coming.

“I’m sorry, but you’re going to have to pack your bags again.”

When Jun Hyuk started talking cautiously, Yoon Kwang Hun realized that something had happened. Packing his bags means that Jun Hyuk will be in the news again. He does not even get very surprised anymore.

“Why? Is it getting noisy again? What happened this time?”

“Uh... I’m the visiting conductor of the Boston Philharmonic starting today.”

“What? Boston? Visiting conductor?”

Yoon Kwang Hun had not been surprised when Jun Hyuk told him to pack his bags, but his voice grew loud when he heard Jun Hyuk say visiting conductor of Boston. Jun Hyuk explained Patrick Quinn’s proposal and everything that had brought him to make the decision, and Yoon Kwang Hun was so happy he could fly away.

“Hey, that’s really good. You’ve finally gotten your hands on a great instrument. Though it is a regret that your first song is Inferno. You have so many songs that are better... Well, I guess there’s nothing you can do about it since that’s all people know.”

Yoon Kwang Hun imagined Jun Hyuk conduct the Boston Philharmonic and wished for the melody to be that of the beautiful songs in the score safe.

“So are you confident? You think you’ll be able to get it on stage? It’ll be hard. Ke ke.”

Yoon Kwang Hun already knows how hard the performance is, so he can say this. He is half in expectation and half in worry.

“I’ll have to find a way to do it. If I can’t find a way to do it, I’ll just give it up.”

When Jun Hyuk spoke as if it is not a big deal, a shout suddenly rang over the phone.

“This kid! You’re being loose. Hey. You have to start this with the thought that you’re going to do it no matter what! This is work! Conducting is work too. What kind of work is there in the world that you can do loosely to give up?”

Yoon Kwang Hun was so loud that Jun Hyuk could picture his angry face.

“You think conducting is the same thing as composing? Did someone come to you with a bundle of money and ask you to write a song for them? That’s something you do because you like to do it. But this is something that the Boston Philharmonic is paying you to do. If you didn’t have the confidence to do it, you should have said that from the beginning and not gone near it. You think Boston Philharmonic is feeding you, taking care of you, and paying you because they have too much money? This kid is being ridiculous.”

In all of the time he had been with Yoon Kwang Hun, he had never seen him get so angry. All he had done was glare at him if he said something particularly profane. So when Yoon Kwang Hun got mad, Jun Hyuk was surprised and stuttered, not knowing what to say.

“S- sir...”

“It’d be lacking to say that you’ll work hard no matter what, but what are you saying? You’ll give up after trying it out if it doesn’t work out? Hey kid. Not even a lady who earns a salary of \$1000 washing dishes in a restaurant thinks like that. I’ll say it again, but go tell them now if you don’t think you’ll be able to do it. Hang up!”

Jun Hyuk sat blankly with the phone that had hung up.

Jun Hyuk’s head had become blank with Yoon Kwang Hun’s scolding, and even forgot that he needs to call Amelia.

Until now, the only thing that he had done with a sense of duty after being paid is modeling for the clothing brand during the audition program. And that was a simple job that ended after just a day.

Other than that, he had only done what he liked. Money had automatically followed when he played the music he liked, made arrangements the way he wanted, and composed what he wanted.

However, there is something that Jun Hyuk has not realized hidden in Yoon Kwang Hun's scolding. Instead of doing as he pleases, he needs to make an effort with the aim of 'responsibility' in mind.

If he wants to achieve his goal, he needs to do it with other people and not do it alone. Creating a song and throwing it at an orchestra to play it on their own does not work. All he has to do is to show the same amount of effort he showed when he worked with the students of New York's music schools.

But the Boston Philharmonic is different. There are clear aims of a performance and a record. Patrick Quinn said that he did not have to make it happen, but he is receiving money just as Yoon Kwang Hun said. And if it is the amount that is written on the contract, it is a fair amount.

Jun Hyuk thought for a while and picked up his phone again.

He could not get himself to call Yoon Kwang Hun when he thought about how he had shouted at him, so he sent a text message.

-[I'll send a VIP ticket for the first performance. Please come.]

He had worried that he would not get a text back, but it was groundless. Yoon Kwang Hun sent a text back in his usual manner as if he had never gotten mad at Jun Hyuk.

-[With a first class plane ticket?]

Chapter 164

“Maestro, are you ready?”

“Yes. I’ll go down now.”

6:30 at night. Tara’s call at precisely the decided time showed how sharp her personality is.

When he went down to the hotel lobby, Tara was waiting for him. However, she was frowning.

“Maestro. Your clothes.....”

“Huh? Why?”

When Jun Hyuk looked down at the jeans and hoodie he was wearing, Tara brought him back to the elevator.

“You need to wear a suit. It is a restaurant where you cannot enter unless you are wearing a suit.”

“What do I do? I don’t have a suit.”

“But – whew – You haven’t looked in the closet yet? There is a tuxedo and suit in there.”

Jun Hyuk saw Tara let out a long sigh and felt bad. She is just working hard, but he felt like he was just giving her a hard time. Thinking that this is all part of the job, he started seeing people’s actions in a different light.

“Ah, I’ll hurry up and change.”

Tara followed Jun Hyuk who ran back to the elevator.

“I can go by myself. You can just wait in the lobby.”

“No. I’ll pick out your tie. Do you...?”

“I know how to tie a tie.”

Tara pulled a shirt and suit out of the guest room closet.

“There’s just the one now, but someone from the tailor shop will be coming tomorrow. They will get your sizes and prepared a couple shirts, tuxedos, and suits. It will be the same for shoes.”

Once Jun Hyuk came out in a suit, Tara looked satisfied.

“Your skin is light, so let’s use the red tie.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

When Jun Hyuk took the tie from Tara and winked, she smiled for the first time since meeting him.

In the car to the restaurant, Tara did not rest in order to detail his schedule going forward.

“Maestro. After tonight’s dinner, you don’t have anything scheduled for tomorrow. From now on, twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays, you will take over the orchestra. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, Maestro Quinn will take over for the regular performances.”

“So I just do 2 days out of the week?”

“That’s right.”

“Then what do I do for the other 5 days? Hang out?”

“No. You’ll have poster photo shoots, press interviews, meals with Boston’s powermen, and attending associations. There will be events like special lectures at New England’s music schools.”

“It sounds busy just hearing about it. Whew.”

“This is nothing. Since becoming the standing conductor and art director, Maestro Quinn has not been able to rest for a single night. He does interviews with the press as well as power bloggers, and even participates in podcasts. There is nothing he can

do until the first season is over.”

The standing conductor of the symphony is similar to the coach of pro baseball team, Red Sox. He needs to constantly communicate with the public until the first season’s score comes out.

Tara saw Jun Hyuk let out a long sigh and smiled again.

“Don’t worry too much. I’ll try to reduce your schedule as much as I can. That’s okay, right?”

“Tara, you’re my savior.”

The wall between the two is slowly coming down. In the meantime, their car arrived at the restaurant.



The restaurant that Tara talked about is famous, so all of the seats and tables are full. With the escort of an employee, he made his way through the passage as though getting through a maze. Once he got to the reserved seats, he saw the Board members and Patrick Quinn drinking.

Chairman Mark Boff introduced each of the board members to Jun Hyuk and he sat among them.

Among these people, there are those who genuinely love music and those who joined the board in order to gain the title of being cultured and refined. What they have in common however, is that they contemplate over realistic matters.

Surplus management and a reputation comparable to the New York Philharmonic. These two things.

Board members also have roles as great donators who give the Boston Symphony about \$1 million every year. They want gains from the Boston Philharmonic in order to continue the surplus and save the money to use the donations in other places.

“Maestro Jun. We would like to be the first to put the full Inferno on stage and release an album at the same time.”

They spoke about the Boston Symphony for a while and finally arrived at the topic of Jun Hyuk and Inferno. They even said why the Board had agreed to invite Jun Hyuk as a visiting conductor on Patrick Quinn's request. It is now Jun Hyuk's turn to answer.

"This is what I'm thinking. Both are possible. But....."

Everyone stopped moving their forks and knives when he said that it is possible, and gave him their attention.

"But? What is it?"

"It will take a fair amount of time."

"How much?"

"Until the Inferno score in all of the orchestra members' heads are completely erased."

When the board members looked at each other without understanding what Jun Hyuk was saying, Patrick Quinn burst out in laughter.

"Ha ha. How novel. But Jun. Will it be possible to erase a score that's embedded in their heads along with shock? Even if they somehow erase it, I'm pretty sure they'll think of it again when everyone gathers for rehearsal."

The table conversation became lost in the world of music. It is not a matter of simply enjoying music, but at a standard that only musicians can understand. Thus, it is a place for just Jun Hyuk and Patrick Quinn.

"The album recording will be possible by recording by instrument part. That's thanks to you, Jun. You're the only person on earth who can conduct Inferno without a problem. But the performance? Since it's an orchestra, the members will have significant skill. I'm sure it will only take moments for them to recall a score that they had forgotten."

"As I said, it's just an issue of time. I can think of a couple methods, but we'll have to test them out to see what would be appropriate for the orchestra."

Jun Hyuk quickly chewed and swallowed a piece of steak.

"Erasing doesn't always mean forgetting. There is also the method of changing it by

tangling it up and mixing it.”

Patrick Quinn was silent for a moment, trying to understand what Jun Hyuk is saying. As if he had been waiting for this, Chairman Mark Boff looked at Jun Hyuk.

“Maestro Jun, you’re different from when I had met you his morning. You seem to have a lot of drive.”

“More than drive, I mean to do my duty. I already invited someone to come to the performance.”

Mark Boff was not the only person who was satisfied with Jun Hyuk’s confidence, and the other Board members were smiling. Patrick Quinn was lost in thought for a while. He could understand Jun Hyuk’s intention, but could not imagine what method he was going to use.

“Jun, can I attend rehearsals? I’ll shut my mouth and stay quiet.”

“That’s an honor for me, Patrick.”

The dinner became a pleasant place of light excitement and anticipation. They quickly finished their champagne and wine.

Chapter 165

Jun Hyuk left the hotel early the next morning. His invitation to Boston was the top story in the culture column, and his articles were all over the internet. Even the BSO homepage had pictures of him, proving that the articles are true. It is best to get out before the reporters come swarming in.

Jun Hyuk went to the park that people of Boston love most. Boston Common is America's first park. It is 60,000 acres, so there is no one who would recognize him in his sweatpants and hoodie.

He had come to the park to get some exercise because he remembered that Philadelphia's conductor Bruno Kazel said that conducting is a matter of stamina.

He repeated running and resting during the morning, ate a sandwich for lunch, and walked around Boston. Other than picking up Tara's calls every hour to tell her not to worry, he was able to tour the city without interruptions.

When the sun started setting, he went back to the hotel, carefully looked around the lobby, and found that Tara was still in interviews. She had gone through the busiest day on Jun Hyuk's behalf.

While Tara acted instead of Jun Hyuk in the lobby, Jun Hyuk had been able to spend plenty of time thinking about how he would hold the first rehearsal.

Jun Hyuk arrived at the concert hall early on the morning of the first rehearsal of *Inferno*, and had a cup of coffee with Patrick Quinn.

"Jun, I don't know if you know but I'm saying just in case....."

"Yes."

"The members are creating performer unions for the Boston Philharmonic."

"Unions?"

"Why? You didn't know?"

“No. I had no idea.”

Patrick Quinn saw Jun Hyuk’s surprised face and remembered the first time he stood on the podium. He wanted to make it so that Jun Hyuk would not have to experience the incredulity that he had felt.

“Since they are employees of the BSO (Boston Symphony Orchestra). They are paid a salary to work.”

“I see.”

Upon leaving school, everything revolves around ‘work’.

“The performers meet with the BSO to go over salaries and conditions every year, but there’s just one thing that you need to know.”

“What is that?”

“Break times and times you work.”

“Excuse me? Break times?”

“Yeah. This isn’t just the case for Boston, but the same anywhere around the world.”

“Well, I can understand working ties but what are breaks in rehearsals?”

“After about 1 hour of practicing, you must give them 10 minutes to rest.”

“What? It’s not school. What is this 10 minutes for every hour?”

“Why? Isn’t it like that in Korea?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know the circumstances in Korea... Then does that mean I have to cut off rehearsals in the middle of a song and give them a break? Is that even possible?”

“Even the orchestra members know that much. Normally, you can say that it’s time for a break once whatever you’re practicing is over.”

Jun Hyuk heard the word ‘normally’ loudly. Then that means that there are

circumstances that are not normal.

“But it’s quite delicate. When the members are having fun or lost in the passion of the song, they don’t ask to take a break. They don’t realize that time is passing either.”

“Ah, I see how that would happen.”

“But when the conductor says nonsense, the conducting is boring, and the performance isn’t fun, they’ll keep the break times without any other thought. Since they can’t focus on the music and performance, they’ll keep looking at the time. As you said, they’ll cut it off in the middle of a song. Ha ha.”

Patrick Quinn chuckled as if it were something funny. When Jun Hyuk heard his laughter, he realized why the members take breaks.

“I see. So the reactions of the conductor and members.....”

“That’s it. You’ll be able to check by looking at the breaks.”

With more breaks and more punctual breaks, it means that the members cannot trust the conductor or that there are differences in musical views that cannot be resolved.

“Maestro Quinn. Then.....”

“Hey Jun, I told you to call me Patrick. If not, I’m going to make sure to call you Maestro Jun too.”

Patrick Quinn glared at Jun Hyuk and shook his finger at him.

“Ah, haha. Alright. Patrick. Then what were the breaks for members like in Vienna? Did they take their breaks on time?”

“What? You’re asking such a straight question? That’s scary. Ha ha.”

There is bitterness in his laughter.

“There were more breaks as time went by. They never missed a break since we started Inferno. They even made sure to leave work exactly on time. They had sent a signal that they cannot do it while I kept pushing it on them.”

On the one hand, it is understandable. The Vienna Philharmonic's roots are as an orchestra of Vienna's court opera theater. Its unique color is that it focuses on tradition and is against modern music.

Their focus on things of the past is not stubbornness. Their thinking is that the Vienna Philharmonic is not the one that needs to be performing contemporary music. Their sense of duty to enrich the classics is more important to them.

"Alright, let's go to the theater. I'm going to see how many times they rest during your rehearsal. Ha ha."

All of the orchestra members were waiting for Jun Hyuk in comfortable clothing. Their looks did not show any tension and were just full of curiosity.

Patrick Quinn had repeatedly said that he is a genius, but the only exposed fact is that he is the composer of *Inferno*. Other than that, his claims to fame are not in classical but in jazz and rock. There are a lot of geniuses who leave 1 good song and disappear.

Jun Hyuk took in all of this attention and went up to the podium. He left the baton on the music stand and spoke,

"Honestly, I cannot understand why this song causes pain. It is not music that I created in order to bring pain to anyone. My intentions for writing it... Well. I think I just made it."

Jun Hyuk could not get himself to say that he had written the specific melody about his painful childhood.

"I'll tell you one thing, though I don't know if it'll be helpful in performing. You do not get used to pain. Even if you feel the same pain repeatedly, the power of that pain remains the same. It hurts. But there is something good in its repetition."

Everyone listened to Jun Hyuk's words about his story rather than the music.

"That you know when it ends. That becomes the strength to withstand the pain."

"Maestro. We have never thought that we'd be able to play this song just by enduring the pain. Isn't there no point in playing it when we can't express it?"

Matthew Price is a performer before he is the concertmaster. The success of the

performance and the record are important, but he is more focused on the desire to express music.

“Yes, that’s right. But don’t you think we need to do at least that much? I ran a bit in the Commons yesterday. I didn’t run to run well. It was in accordance with Maestro Kazel’s warning that I need to have the stamina to back up my conducting.”

Jun Hyuk hit his thighs with both of his hands and laughed.

“Enduring is also a basic fitness to playing Inferno perfectly.”

However, the members did not stop looking at him in distrust.

“If it had been possible to play the song automatically by building the basic fitness, we would not have suffered so much.”

One of the members yelled and with that sound, everyone started buzzing.

Jun Hyuk put his hand up, calmed the members down, and continued his explanation.

“You’re right. There’s no way that it’ll be enough. As I told you, the basic fitness is just the first step.”

“Then what’s the second step?”

Concertmaster Matthew Price did not pay attention to the members’ buzzing, and looked only at Jun Hyuk.

“The second step is pretty easy. But as you said concertmaster, there is still the problem of expression.”

“I’m sure you’ll be able to tell us in detail?”

“Yes. You’ll play mechanically. Playing the notes exactly as they’re on the score like a machine – that’s the second step.”

“Well well. We always play exactly.”

Matthew Price seemed a bit disappointed upon hearing that the second step he had been anticipating was something that went without saying. They are the Boston

Philharmonic, a famous orchestra in the U.S. They are confident that they play all songs with more exactness than machines do.

But Jun Hyuk shook his head and spoke clearly,

“No. What do you mean the Boston Symphony plays like machines? That’s nonsense. You are playing like people. With abundant emotions.”

“It means we follow the movement of the baton exactly in order to bring out that emotion.”

Matthew Price who had seemed patient, frowned. They had not gathered here to hear about meaningless basics. Isn’t exact conducting the basic of basics?

“Whew – How do I explain this.....”

Jun Hyuk had an uncomfortable expression on his face. He needs to show them the precise difference between an ‘exact performance’ and a ‘mechanical performance’ with his body.

From the seats below the stage, Patrick Quinn and Chairman Mark Boff watched their conversation with interest.

“Maestro. Do you understand what that young conductor is saying?”

“Yes. He said that the second step is easy, but it is actually the more difficult method.”

“It’s more difficult?”

“Yes. It’s not easy for people to play a song while taking out emotions completely. And isn’t it music? Music makes emotions fluctuate.”

Patrick burst out in laughter while looking at Mark Boff who was still lost in puzzlement.

Chapter 166

Jun Hyuk scratched his head and mulled it over before having a good idea and looking around.

“Tara?”

“Yes, Maestro.”

Tara, who had been waiting at the entrance to backstage, quickly came out to stand next to Jun Hyuk.

“Can you get me a pen and paper?”

“Excuse me? Paper? Are you asking for music sheets?”

“No. Just white printer paper.”

“Yes, Maestro.”

Patrick Quinn smiled as he looked on at what was happening on stage.

“Look. It seems he’s going to do something now. I mean something fun.”

Jun Hyuk wrote notes on the paper that Tara brought him. He filled the white sheet with notes and then spoke to the orchestra.

“Oh right. Do you want to take a break? I think it’ll take about 10 minutes.”

When Jun Hyuk spoke, the members got up from their seats and gathered around him.

Jun Hyuk is just writing notes. Since he is writing on a blank sheet of paper, they cannot tell the pitch and there are just mixed lengths of 4 minute notes, 8 minute notes, whole notes, half notes, et cetera. It is boring to watch, so most people scattered to go to the bathroom or get a cup of tea.

Patrick Quinn and Mark Boff could not see what Jun Hyuk is doing, so they could not

wait and went up to the stage to take a glance at the paper before going back down to the seats.

Chairman Mark Boff could not even begin to guess what it was that Jun Hyuk is trying to do because it is the first time he is seeing something so strange.

“What is it that Jun Hyuk is doing right now?”

“I don’t know. I can’t guess either because it’s something that I’m seeing for the first time as well.”

Patrick Quinn was also seeing this for the first time. After learning how to work with scores, he had never written notes on regular paper. Notes written on white paper are unfamiliar.

When the break ended and the members returned to their seats, Jun Hyuk handed out 6 sheets full of notes to the violin performers.

“There. I’ll start with the violins. As you can see, you can’t tell the pitch of notes and can only see the lengths. Right?”

The 6 violinists looked at the sheets on their stands in a strange manner.

As they are not on scores, there are no pitches to the notes. He did not separate the measures so they cannot figure out the beat, and there is no rhythm because they do not know where to end it.

“Alright. Now we’ll decide the pitch of the note. The 6 of you just have to choose different notes. Concertmaster? Would you like to go with C?”

“Sure.”

Matthew Price had a sour look on his face. He could not see what this has to do with a precise performance, and it seemed like a joke that he is asking them to perform with just notes without pitch.

“So Concertmaster has chosen C. Everyone else needs to choose.”

The 6 violinists each chose a different key.

“Alright. Now, I’ll lead. Follow the beat of my conducting exactly. Alright? Do not pay attention to the sounds of the other performers. There are more notes than it seems, and you must make sure to take each of the half notes. If your attention strays even a little, you will lose the beat as well as where you are in the notes. Then.”

Jun Hyuk signaled the start with the baton, and the 6 violin bows moved in concert.

There was no need to move the left hands pressing down on the violin strings. It is just a sound to make with one hand.

When the 6 sounds combined however, a fast and light melody like a scherzo flowed out and spread over the theater. The orchestra members who were watching could not hide their surprise either, crying out in shock and Patrick Quinn bolted up from his seat.

After the 1 minute performance was over, the violinists held their instruments and could not speak. How is something like this possible? What kind of magic is this?

Jun Hyuk did not pay attention to the surprised orchestra members or people in the seats, and took the 6 sheets back.

“Then shall we change it and try it out?”

The aftertaste of the 6 violins was still lingering, and Jun Hyuk started handing out scores again.

This time, it was for the violin, cello, clarinet, oboe, trumpet, and horn players. He had organized one person each from the main instruments.

“You can change the scores if you’d like. Take any score and choose a key. You can play like the violinists just did.”

The performers’ faces were full of interest as if they were young children who had discovered a new game. What kind of music would come out this time?

The 6 performers focused on Jun Hyuk’s baton. When the baton moved, an entirely different music from what the violinists had just played, flowed. How could this be? When they had only played with one key?

On top of that, different music – pretty great music – comes no matter what key they

use, what instrument they select, or how the scores are mixed up!

When the performance ended, everyone gathered to the 6 scores.

There was even someone who was calculating how many songs would come out by combining the 6 scores.

Then, someone grabbed all 6 scores quickly. It was Patrick Quinn.

Patrick Quinn spread the 6 scores out on the floor and sat among them. He moved his finger and combined the notes at random, seeing what kind of melody results from this. As the standing conductor has taken over the stage, everyone had to stand back and watch.

Not a single person thought that it was rude. Everyone wanted to look at the scores and see what kind of music could come out.

Eventually, Matthew Price could not resist any longer and went behind Patrick Quinn to do the same thing. Then many of the orchestra members ran out and gathered around the scores.

Jun Hyuk watched this and wondered if he should include or take this out of the practice time.

“It works! Somehow, this configuration works too.”

“This is nuts. Really. How is this possible?”

“I just tried one with 3 instruments. Goodness... A 2-minute song is possible too!”

The members tried out different configurations with the scores, and started chatting as though going through a treasure hunt.

He had not been trying to show them magic. He needed to show them the difference in performing, but they were showing a completely different reaction. There was only one reason why this unusual reaction did not end and kept going.

Jun Hyuk went to Patrick Quinn, took the scores, and put them in Patrick’s hands.

“Patrick. This is a gift. So go back to your seat and look through them slowly.”

Patrick Quinn finally rose from the floor after he had been staring blankly at the papers.

“Oh... Excuse me. I interfered with rehearsals. I was supposed to just be visiting. I’m really sorry.”

Patrick Quinn could not take his eyes off of the scores even after going back to his seat.

When the chatting and admiration of the members on stage did not stop, Jun Hyuk tapped the music stand with his baton.

“There there. Let’s stop playing now. Anyway, the people who just played will know. They played mechanically, paying attention to just the lengths of sounds and resting notes. Isn’t that right?”

The performers could only nod. After looking at notes on scores, they really did play mechanically while looking at such a boring score. It is an inevitable method of performing since there is no pitch, speed, or intensity.

“Usually, there is no choice but to play a song you are playing for the first time, mechanically. It’s just that before you all play a song, you read the score beforehand and commit it to memory before practice even starts. That’s why a mechanical practice is impossible.”

If they look at the score and get used to the general flow of the song, they are bound to put emotion to it. The feeling, emotion, sentiment in a score will come out once the performance starts.

“Maestro. Then don’t we just need to perform a new song? Why did you use this magical method?”

Concertmaster Matthew Price dug in to the end. When Jun Hyuk saw this side of him, he realized that the concertmaster really does want to perform Inferno.

“That’s because you are all professionals.”

Now, even if Jun Hyuk stopped speaking for a moment, no one spoke. Everyone listened and only looked at Jun Hyuk.

“The moment you all open a score, you speed read the notes on both pages and get an

understanding of the flow. That's why I needed to use this strange method."

Everyone finally understood and nodded.

"Everyone. This is not magic. They are just notes. You said that it is impossible, but it is possible to play mechanically. It's because you are full of emotion and you won't get rid of the thinking that instruments express emotion."

Matthew Price had been listening quietly when he spoke again,

"Good. That's good, Maestro. Let's say that we simply play mechanically. Then does that mean it will be possible to play Inferno?"

"Yes. Instead, someone will feel awkwardness. The people who can listen to Inferno to the 4th part with patience. Of these people, there will be those that say that it is awkward because they can catch the delicate expression."

"Maestro. If our Boston Philharmonic is the first to play Inferno, half of the audience will be made of conductors and composers. They will be sure to feel the awkwardness."

"I'm sure you're saying that we can't just imitate, no... that you want to perform it perfectly?"

"That's right."

The Concertmaster's decisiveness showed on his face.

"Alright. Then you'll have a pretty hard time."

Jun Hyuk smiled at the Concertmaster. He is middle aged, but he seems to be the orchestra member with the youngest mindset.

"If you all had not looked at the entire score, it would even have been possible to record the album tomorrow. It's not possible to tell what kind of song it is by looking at each instrument's parts. If I conduct and we record by part, it would be possible."

It is too late however. Every member of the orchestra had already seen the whole score. It is as though they had opened Pandora's box.

“So all of this... Repeatedly enduring it and playing the song the mechanically is the way to forget the whole song. I think that if you all forget the score to a certain extent, you can record the album and then prepare for the performance.”

Chapter 167

The orchestra members started to get excited when Jun Hyuk brought up the album and performance. They had thought that it is impossible, but they now thought that it may be possible if they have the original composer who can work magic.

“Tchaikovsky!”

The orchestra and Jun Hyuk turned their heads to the direction of this yell. There, Patrick Quinn was clutching the 6 sheets of paper and trembling.

“This was Tchaikovsky. ! It’s that song!”

Patrick Quinn ran up onto the stage.

“Jun, I shouldn’t be imposing so much but I keep doing it. Forgive me.”

“No, it’s okay.”

Everyone was confused by Patrick Quinn’s unexpected behavior, but Jun Hyuk was smiling gently.

“The notes on this paper are Tchaikovsky’s , right?”

“Yes. You really are the top Maestro. You recognized that at once.”

When Jun Hyuk gave him a thumbs up, the orchestra members looked around. No one had been able to figure it out... Patrick Quinn is impressive for figuring it out.

“I can’t help it. What kind of magic did you use?”

“Excuse me?”

“I’m asking how you’re able to make music in this way. With just 6 melodies – no, it’s not even a melody. How are you able to make it so that you can combine any sounds to create music?”

“Well. It’s really not anything.”

Explaining how to create music is much more difficult than creating music itself. It is especially so when making a song in such a method.

“I just completely dismantled a symphony into measures and relocated them. It requires a bit of thought to create decent combinations when putting them back together... but I could only do 6 now because there wasn’t enough time.”

“Then... Then does that mean you finished all of this in 10 minutes?”

“Yes.”

Patrick Quinn could ask this because he had already seen Jun Hyuk’s abilities. But the orchestra members’ jaws dropped when they heard Patrick Quinn.

They had thought that the 6 scores had been prepared in advance. They had guessed that the composer of Inferno would have done a lot of other fun and experimental songs. No one had thought that he had written it on the spot.

“Is that why you chose Tchaikovsky?”

“I thought of when you were rehearsing Tchaikovsky when I first came to the theater.”

“Whew – I thought that I wouldn’t be surprised by you after meeting you in Salzburg this summer, but I see there’s still a lot left.”

Patrick Quinn hit Jun Hyuk’s shoulder and laughed.

“Then I’ll stay quiet and won’t interfere anymore, so keep doing your mysterious magic. Ha ha.”

When Patrick Quinn went back down to his seat, Jun Hyuk looked at the orchestra members who still could not close their mouths and spoke,

“You’ll have to play with patience and endurance from now on, and you’ll have to play your instruments mechanically.”

“Ho ho. Neither of these are easy.”

Concertmaster Matthew Price thought about their difficult future and burst out laughing.

“Then there’s nothing more that I can do today. It would be good to practice on your own. As I said, look only at the notes while making the effort to forget the complete song.”

When Jun Hyuk bowed his head to the orchestra, they applauded him loudly. They showed their genuine acceptance of him as their maestro through their clapping.

Jun Hyuk came down from the podium and looked at the orchestra again.

“And I’ll give the last request, no warning.”

The orchestra members who had been about to pack up their instruments looked at Jun Hyuk again.

“Please do not come to rehearsals with me with a hangover.”

Everyone stopped and looked at Jun Hyuk at his unexpected words.

“I don’t know why you drank until you were drunk yesterday, but there was a difference in the way you played Tchaikovsky two days ago and the short song you played today.”

Jun Hyuk only said what he needed to and bowed to the two people in the seats. Tara ran out and led Jun Hyuk out backstage. Since he had ended rehearsals early, she wanted to pull his schedule forward and end the day’s tasks early.

On the stage, there were 2 members who stared blankly at Jun Hyuk’s back while the rest packed up their instruments.

Patrick Quinn and Mark Boff got up from their seats.

“He he. I think the orchestra will be more scared of young Jun than they are of me. He caught on to that small difference in breath at once.”

“Excuse me? Then it was true? Did he really make a distinction between the performers who have a hangover? I thought he had just been guessing because most of the orchestra likes to drink.”

Mark Boff felt like the short rehearsal he saw today was like watching an exciting movie. On top of that, it is a movie that left a cliffhanger for a sequel.

“No. Horn, cello. These 2 people. The horn’s breath was short and the cello was too heavy. There’s no doubt that they drank a ton last night.”

“You’re impressive for recognizing that as well.”

“It’s nothing. I heard them play for over 2 months. I already know their abilities and characteristics well. Jun only heard them once, and for a short time at that. But he still figured it out exactly. The orchestra members will be more stung by his recognizing that someone drank rather than the magic he showed us.”

“He really is a genius as you said. I had my doubts when I just heard about him, but it is such an unbelievable shock when seeing it for myself.”

“So you understand why I said that he would be standing at the top of the music world within 10 years? In this state, it could be 5 years instead of 10. That is if the western world accepts this young Asian genius.”

Patrick Quinn left the theater after leaving these meaningful words.

This is how Jun Hyuk’s first rehearsal ended, like a mysterious magic show.



Inside the car back to the hotel, Tara kept taking glances at Jun Hyuk. She was also surprised. She had worked for 2 maestros while working for the Boston Symphony for over 5 years. And after jumping into this field due to her love for classical music, she had been able to see a lot of conductors.

There had been opportunities to see their incredible talents for herself, but there is a difference in the abilities that Jun Hyuk showed today.

“Tara. Is my schedule over for today with this?”

“No. You can rest until the afternoon at the hotel and then you have to visit the concert hall in the evening. It was originally scheduled to happen a few days later, but it’s better to get it over with since there is extra time today.”

“Concert?”

“Yes. It is the New England Conservatory’s performance. Maestro Patrick Quinn was supposed to participate.....”

“But then, why me?”

The New England Conservatory students asked for you since you are such a hot topic. Since it’s not a place where you both need to be present, Maestro Quinn was happy to back out.”

“Do I just have to watch the concert?”

“There will probably be a time for some light Q&A.”

The New England Conservatory (NEC) is the oldest independent music school in America and is oriented toward group music.

It is particularly famous for orchestra, conducting, piano, jazz, and vocals.

“And that’s the last?”

“Yes. But it will be a bit busy tomorrow. You need to attend 2 sponsor association events. They are fairly important sponsors, and they are highly anticipating their meeting with the young maestro.”

“The conservatory is a bit better than the sponsor associations.”

Jun Hyuk let out a long sigh.

Chapter 168

NEC is the only music school that has been chosen as an American history monument. Its main concert hall, Jordan Hall, is just 1 block away from Boston Concert Hall.

When Tara led Jun Hyuk into Jordan Hall, reporters holding cameras came swarming at them.

“We couldn’t avoid this. We need to reveal every part of your schedule on the homepage, and we alert last minute changes to your schedule through social media. Maestro! Smile.”

When Tara quickly spoke in hushed tones, Jun Hyuk sighed and forced a smile. His awkward face was captured with camera flashes.

“Please push the questions back for after the concert. There is not much time left until the concert... Then excuse us.”

Tara got rid of the reporters and went into the concert hall. Even in this short moment, Tara’s working capabilities showed. She cannot prevent the reporters from showing up, but she had kept Jun Hyuk in mind to show up with just enough time before the concert to have his picture taken but not to go through interviews.

The orchestra was already in position on the stage. The members were tuning their instruments.

Jun Hyuk settled in a seat all the way in the back of the audience.

“Maestro, there is a seat waiting for you in the front.”

“Let’s just listen from here. It looks like today’s program is jazz, but the brass instruments drown the other sounds out. This concert hall has a reputation for having a good sound system... And it’ll be fine here since they have mic equipment as well.”

As Jun Hyuk said, over 20 people were preparing as a big band to perform jazz. For string instruments, there were only the electric guitar, electric bass, and contra bass. The majority of the rest were saxophones, trumpets, and trombones.

Jazz originating from New Orleans is usually done with a band made up of one person on each instrument. Then it started to take the form of popular music with wind instruments in the 1920s. This band is a classical orchestra that is used to playing music like waltzes, so they pushed out all of the members and boomed with those who could play popular music. Thus, the birth of big bands.

Even until then, jazz was not music to listen to but music to dance to.

Especially with the Prohibition Era, symbolized with Al Capone and the illegal underground Cotton Club.

These underground clubs wanted music for the mood in addition to alcohol, and big bands performed music that was exactly fitting for this setting.

In this atmosphere, the unique exotic flavor 'jungle sound' was showcased or a capable soloist was put at the front to fuse the music's unity and jazz's freedom. With improvisation however, all that was done was to show a bit of it at a designated period.

Since there are a lot of performers, it is difficult to go into improv, the zest of jazz, for 10 minutes. Generally, they perform to the movement of the conductor's baton.

When the big band's conductor came out, the audience broke out in cheering and applause and Jun Hyuk's expectations also rose. It is the big band's jazz that he had heard on albums a few times. However, it is the first time he is watching a performance for himself.

The students performing wearing jeans, t-shirts, and hoodies rather than dark suits was familiar to Jun Hyuk. He felt awkward as the only person wearing a suit.

When the conductor's baton moved, a light drum started and the brass instruments rang loudly throughout the theater.

"Ah, well... Ha ha."

As soon as the introduction started, Jun Hyuk laughed quietly. The song that the big band is performing is Jun Hyuk and Stanley Clarke's improv 'The First' album.

A song that was played on just the piano and bass has been arranged to fit a big band. They inserted a new melody at times and there were a few changes, but it is an arrangement that shows the record's sound.

It was a performance that fit almost exactly with the album's running time. After over 40 minutes, the audience clapped and yelled for an encore.

After the conductor calmed everyone down, he took the mic.

"Ah ah. Was the performance okay?"

When the conductor laughed and greeted the audience, they responded with applause again.

"I'm sure you all know well, but this song was made on just the piano and bass. It was a bit difficult to arrange."

The conductor coughed 2 times and kept speaking,

"There is a very special guest here today. He created a buzz in the world of classical with music that is like noise and has become the visiting conductor of our Boston Philharmonic with it. He has the title of a young genius without exaggeration. Maestro? Forget it! To us, he is just an envious guy with the sexiest pianist girlfriend in the world, the person who has gifted us with minimalist jazz beats, brought together metal heros of the past, and is a jazz and rock and roll star. The name?"

The conductor held the mic out to the audience and everyone yelled,

"JUN! JUN! JUN! JUN!"

Jun Hyuk had not dreamed that this kind of scene would occur. He was confused with this situation, so Tara whispered in his ear.

"Go up on the stage. I can't predict with kids..."

Tara tsked and closed her mouth, pushing Jun Hyuk. She remembered that Jun Hyuk is in the same age group as the students.

When Jun Hyuk rose from his seat and walked down the pathway, the students in their seats held their hands out. Jun Hyuk took turns giving each a high five as he approached the stage.

When he went on the stage, the conductor holding the mic ran and embraced him. It is an action that does not fit the Boston atmosphere of not showing emotion. Jun Hyuk

was passed the mic and the applause exploded again.

Hearing the shout, 'Jang Jun Hyuk!' he could tell that there are a few study abroad students in the audience. Tara was just hoping that Jun Hyuk would not say anything weird. There are a fair amount of reporters in the seats. She could see that quite a few of them already had their voice recorders out.

Jun Hyuk held the mic and had an awkward look.

"Shit. If I had known this would happen, I wouldn't have worn a suit."

The audience burst out in laughter at Jun Hyuk's light joke.

"Aren't you honestly thinking that you'd rather have my girlfriend Amelia on this stage?"

The audience cheered again.

"It's been a while since I've seen as well... but American people start with a great joke and great language, but I'll just speak with music."

Jun Hyuk gave the mic to the conductor, took his blazer off and put it on the stage floor. Jun Hyuk went to where the orchestra is sitting and asked the guitarist to borrow his guitar. Then, a concert staff member ran up to bring him an electric guitar.

The students already saw that Jun Hyuk's guitar playing skills are incredible on YouTube, and started screaming.

Jun Hyuk put the guitar on and the staff hung a wireless jack on his belt. Jun Hyuk went to the conductor and after a few words, the conductor seemed surprised and smiled brightly, nodding.

"Check the sound now. You need to record this perfectly. There can't be even the slightest mistake. Everyone got it?"

The music director's urgent instructions flowed out through all staff members' headsets.

There was even a stand mic on the center of the stage. When Jun Hyuk saw the mic and looked embarrassed, the conductor brought the audience to applaud him again.

With the clapping, reporters got up from their seats and ran out to the front of the stage. From seeing the mic, they had a feeling that they would get a scoop today.

Jun Hyuk tuned the guitar for a moment, shook his head, and stood in front of the mic.

When the intro flowed from the guitar, they realized that it is a music that is entirely unexpected.

If it is someone who has ever listened to music, the intro of classic rockabilly tunes is that of a legendary rock and roll song.

It is The Beatles John Lennon's 'Rock' n Roll Itself'. It is Chuck Berry's song.

Chuck Berry is such a legend that it is not an exaggeration to say that he is the completion to rock n roll. He had a profound impact on musicians like Elvis Presley, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones.

The Beach Boys, called America's pride to take on the Beatles, even plagiarized one of his songs.

The Beach Boys' top hit song 'Surfin' U.S.A.' (1963) is a plagiarism of Chuck Berry's song, 'Sweet Little Sixteen' (1958).

Jun Hyuk's intro is 'Johnny B. Goode' from the movie 'Back to the Future'.

When the guitar intro was over, Jun Hyuk took the mic and started singing,

"Deep down in Louisiana close to New Orleans,

Way back up in the wood among the evergreens..."

He stopped at just 2 verses. Because the students in the audience were following along, the passion did not go down even if Jun Hyuk stopped singing.

Jun Hyuk's improv started with the guitar solo part. The big band took care of a simple chord, and he played various melodies with the guitar. When the roles changed and Jun Hyuk's guitar and the strings started scratching out chords, the trumpet and saxophone showed a new tune.

Jun Hyuk scratched the guitar strings as he admired the school jazz band's impressive

skills. The band showed perfect synchronization as if it had become one instrument, and the conductor did not stop leading them as though playing one great instrument.

However, there is a lot of difficulty for a band of over 20 people to continue an improv performance. Their limit was a little over 10 minutes. When the big band's chord started squeaking, Jun Hyuk gave the conductor a look to signal ending the performance with the drum's cymbal.

Jun Hyuk took the guitar off of his shoulder and shook the conductor's hand. Jun Hyuk thought that this was much better than holding a conversation with the students, and slipped backstage while the audience shouted for an encore. Tara saw this and also rushed to run backstage.

"Maestro, go back out on stage and respond to the applause. I will take care of the encore."

While Jun Hyuk went out and greeted the audience again, Tara told the staff that they cannot stay for an encore because of the next item on their schedule.

Tara and Jun Hyuk left the concert hall once he came backstage again.

Chapter 169

“Tara, I’m willing to take on any events like this. Ha ha.”

Inside the car, Jun Hyuk laughed loudly with a light heart. He could not remember the last time he had been part of such a fun performance.

“Today’s performance is going to go up on YouTube right away. A lot of the students recorded it on their phones.”

“Violation rights – What, is it a problem that like?”

“No. It’s not that sensitive. It’s just.....”

Tara recalled the concert and had a subtle look on her face.

“It’s just? Ah, me singing?”

“Yes. I’m sure that will become tremendous news.”

“The first measure I sang was off pitch, but it was plenty that I could handle. There’s nothing special about it.”

Jun Hyuk had a nonchalant expression as if it was insignificant. Tara had found out about Jun Hyuk’s appearance on the audition program in Korea while looking up information on him. She also knew that he had become a hot topic because he was the only participant who had not been singing.

She had been taken aback when she saw that Jun Hyuk singing on the stage as though it is nothing. She had thought that he did not like singing itself.

“What were you going to do if the students in the audience hadn’t been singing along?”

“Of course everyone will sing along when it’s Chuck Berry’s famous song. Don’t you think I thought that far?”

Whatever happened, Jun Hyuk was extremely satisfied with today’s performance.

“Tara. Forget the other stuff. Today’s schedule was a success, right?”

“Yes. It’ll have 100 times the effect of an interview. ‘Maestro Sings Rock n Roll’. There isn’t any outlet that won’t use this great headline.”

When Jun Hyuk saw Tara smiling brightly, he felt good because it was as though he had helped her out a little when she is working so hard for him.

Jun Hyuk was praying for the time to go by quickly in this place with such a different atmosphere from yesterday’s performance. 20 minutes had not even passed in this lunch that had started at 1 in the afternoon. But Jun Hyuk had already cleared his plate.

More than 10 elderly women were in a small banquet hall in the Boston Symphony concert hall and eating little bits of the catered food.

They ate slowly and only wet their lips with their coffees. What frustrated Jun Hyuk more was that he could barely hear them with the way they speak.

He would need to use a hearing aid to hear them exchange their thoughts on Inferno and classical music.

However, the lunch took on an entirely different mood with one person’s question.

“Maestro, is today’s news true?”

“Excuse me? What news are you talking about?”

“The performance with the New England Conservatory last night.”

“Ah, yes. It just happened like that.”

“How did you come up with the idea to perform Chuck Berry’s song?”

It was not criticism about how Boston’s maestro could perform rock n roll. It was a question with wide eyes full of curiosity.

“It fit the mood yesterday. The students drunk in jazz were looking at me, and I couldn’t splash cold water on them. And I had fun.”

“Maestro Jun is taking on a variety of genres like rock n roll, blues, and jazz. I don’t

know if you know, but his performing skills are on par as well.”

Tara, who was joining them for lunch, did not lose the chance to grab the sponsors’ attention and praised Jun Hyuk.

“I used to like Bill Haley’s music more than I liked Chuck Berry’s.”

“What are you talking about? Buddy Holly was the best at the time.”

“Ho ho. The conclusion is going to be Elvis Presley anyway.”

“Elvis is great too, but the Beatles’ musicality is on top.”

The women left the elaborate lunch on their plates and talked about old stars and their music. Jun Hyuk was no longer the object of their attention. The topic was their memories.

When they were young, America was a completely conservative society. It was a time when rock n roll was considered music of vulgar hoodlums or the devil’s music. They hid LPs from their parents and listened to them behind their backs.

The British Invasion, an expression for when British music took over America, started in February 7, 1964. The Beatles zone F. The girls who had been screaming their names when they first stepped foot in Kennedy airport, are now here to sponsor classical music.

Now they may seem to be people with luck as a lawyer’s wife, banker’s wife, CEO’s wife, but they loved their idols more than the teenagers today and had passionate youths with rock n roll.

The memories of their fiery childhoods are better topics of conversation than classical music or the young Asian genius composer.

Jun Hyuk, now forgotten, did not have much to do but listen to their conversation.

While drinking coffee and listening to them speak, he realized that they had experienced the music that he had only heard in albums with their bodies. They are now old women whose blonde hair has turned white, but they are the pioneers who opened the door to popular music.

When their time to reminisce ended, the lunch also ended. After reminiscing about their pasts for a while, it was evident that they had a lot of fun. Their refined and elegant expressions have disappeared and they were only left with the passion blushed red in their cheeks.

When a restaurant employee cleared the table, the sponsors pulled their checkbooks out of their bags. Then they wrote the amount for their donations on the spot and handed them over.

There were no envelopes with bills that hid how much they were donating, and there was no immature battle over who would write a larger number on their check. They each wrote an amount that was fitting for their circumstances, and handed the checks over proudly.

Jun Hyuk got a glance of the values of the checks and was surprised that they were not that high. The largest amount was just \$10,000 and the rest were just a few thousand.

Tara put the checks in her bag and jabbed Jun Hyuk's side.

"Thank you for giving us your precious time today. The donations you made today will be put toward the new challenge that the Boston Symphony will take on."

Jun Hyuk recited the words that Tara had written for him politely and precisely.

"Ho ho. Maestro, will you put the music that we enjoyed as youths in that new music?"

"Of course. If it's possible, I'll try to create a stage to perform with those people."

The meeting ended after Jun Hyuk kissed each of the women on the cheek. The sponsors now head to the concert hall to watch rehearsals. It is a benefit of being a donator.

"Tara, drop me off at the park on your way back. I don't feel so good after sitting still and shoving meat down my throat. I'll run a bit before going back to the hotel."

"You know that you have another appointment in the evening, right? Please make sure you're not late."

Tara started to see Jun Hyuk in a new light because he was handling these situations better than she thought he would. He had handled today pretty well.

“Maestro. I know they are difficult appointments, but you are doing well.”

When Jun Hyuk saw Tara smiling brightly, he remembered something he had been wondering about.

“What did you think about the donations today? Is that much a success?”

Jun Hyuk was thinking that the donations might have been reduced because of himself.

“Of course. There’s someone who donated a whole \$10,000. That’s more than 30% of what Maestro Quinn and the former conductor brought in.”

“Really? Donations are smaller than I thought they would be.”

“Are thousands of dollars a small amount? Ah, well Maestro’s income is so high..... With royalties, album sales, and everything else.”

When Tara listed Jun Hyuk’s income on her fingers, he blushed.

“Ah, that’s not what I meant.....”

Tara saw Jun Hyuk quickly waving his hands and burst out laughing.

“Ho ho. I’m joking, it’s a joke. There aren’t many sponsors in reality who donate tens of thousands of dollars.”

When Jun Hyuk thought of sponsors, he thought that the basic was tens of thousands of dollars. But just from today, he realized that it is just the middle, no more no less.

“Most donations amount to tens or hundreds in a year. If they go into the thousands, they are entered into celebrated contributions.”

“Then is it rare to see donators who give that much?”

“No, there are a fair amount of them. But most of them are private sponsors, not people who come to these lunches and rehearsal previews. Only the people we saw today want this kind of gathering.”

“I see. Then is the dinner going to be like those old women as well?”

“No. They will be women in their thirties. They are not housewives but rather successful women, so it won’t be boring. And just have a hard time today. For 2 weeks after this, you don’t have anything in your schedule.”

“That’s welcome news.”

Jun Hyuk had to run in the park again in order to go to dinner later.

Chapter 170

Dinner was much more perplexing than lunch was. Tara's description that it is a gathering for young female sponsors was inaccurate. It was a gathering for leopards who did whatever they needed to in order to succeed, putting in more effort than the men.

They are loud and expressive. They poured questions out on him and did not hesitate to make dirty jokes about his beautiful girlfriend.

A few were even blatantly flirtatious. It was to the point where even Tara was sweating.

They could understand why these women who never requested dinner with white-haired old conductors had been quick to ask for a dinner with Jun Hyuk.

Once the over 2 hour dinner was over, Jun Hyuk thought that this would be more tiring than conducting all symphonies.

Jun Hyuk was thankful to Tara for not scheduling another meeting with sponsors for him for 2 weeks. But Jun Hyuk did not know Tara's true toils. She was moving quietly on behalf of Jun Hyuk.

When a Korean player enters the major leagues, the first sponsors to appear are from the Korean society abroad. As such, the Korean society in Boston was trying to create a sponsor association.

However, Tara respectfully declined. She did not want Jun Hyuk to have to be called away to a gathering to drink at least once a month.

"We will respectfully decline having sponsors who have never seen the Boston Philharmonic, but would like to participate just because the conductor is Korean. The Boston Philharmonic only receives donations that are for music. I will let you know the best way to give support. Purchase tickets and watch the concert. Maestro Jun will be most pleased with that."

It was not just that. She made sure to block access from Korean reporters. She did not know why, but she could tell that Jun Hyuk hates the Korean press.

Two weeks went by after the first rehearsal. The orchestra members have a goal, but it is not easy to achieve that goal. They still cannot perform even half of the 1st part.

They even used the method that the Berlin Philharmonic used. The members put in ear plugs, paid attention to other sounds, and played the music focusing only on the score and Jun Hyuk's conducting. However, they only came to know the complaints of the Berlin Philharmonic for over a year. The Berlin Philharmonic is really persistent for performing in this frustrating method for over a year, and conductor Maestro Saril Petrenko really has extreme patience.

Jun Hyuk had been expecting the orchestra to forget at least a bit of the score and started to fret. He was not sure if they would be able to complete the song by next May when the season is over. It is also unprecedented that a visiting conductor can be put up for 2 seasons with the same song. Even if he had Patrick Quinn's support, the Board would not tolerate it.

As Yoon Kwang Hun said, a professional must do as much as he is paid.

He finished a rehearsal without development, came back to the hotel, and contemplated how they could succeed in a short period of time.

While lost in thought, he heard the sound of a visitor. When Jun Hyuk opened the door, Amelia jumped into his arms.

"Amelia. What's going on?"

"I didn't call you so I could surprise you. What do you think?"

"You succeeded. I'm really surprised. Ha ha."

"Do you know how much I suffered to switch my schedule around? I completely pushed the concert in Japan back."

After winning the Tchaikovsky Competition, Amelia was the emerging female pianist. She is about to surpass Yuja Wang who is currently the best in China. A flashy appearance with a fitting performance full of charisma and power. Even a fashion that shows the passion of South America.

The number of fans she had increased as they admired her videos on YouTube and in Japan where there are a lot of piano fanciers, her popularity is explosive. If she pushed

the Japan concert back, it means that she has pushed back an incredible income.

“Then how about in Boston? You don’t have a concert?”

“Ugh – Why wouldn’t I? My manager won’t let me rest. I have 2 concerts, one at Harvard and one at MIT. And I have to go to Philadelphia in 3 days.”

“What? You didn’t come here to spend Christmas together?”

“Sorry. Philadelphia is the Christmas and New Years concert. Boston Philharmonic has a concert too.”

“Then we don’t have time to be doing this!”

Jun Hyuk picked Amelia up and went into the room.

“How long do you think it’ll take?”

“What? The performance?”

“Yeah.”

“3 months to record the album. The performance should end with this season? We need to put it on stage in May. That’s the goal.”

Jun Hyuk leaned on Amelia and spoke confidently.

“Oho. It looks like you’re overflowing with drive.”

“He he. There’s a reason why I have to.”

Amelia felt like the maestro title brought Jun Hyuk motivation. To her, the most fitting image of Jun Hyuk is as a conductor. Furthermore, a conductor who conducts his own music.

“Then what happens once this season ends?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t thought about it.”

As Amelia had worried, Jun Hyuk was not preparing at all. She cautiously brought up

what she always wanted to say to him.

“Jun. Don’t take this the wrong way and listen.”

“Yeah. What is it?”

“Just because you make the world talk doesn’t mean that you’ll keep getting opportunities like the Boston Philharmonic. You only have Inferno as the one objective data.”

“So?”

“The world’s famous maestros might praise you, but philharmonic orchestras will react coldly. A young genius whose everything is Inferno. That’s it. If you perform and release an album with Boston, other places won’t call for you. And.....”

“And what?”

Amelia hit Jun Hyuk’s hand when he jokingly stuttered. She is in the middle of saying something important.

“Since Inferno is experimental and underground, there’s a high possibility it’ll end after this one time. The reason for other philharmonics to perform it disappears.”

It is what Colin said a long time ago when he quit the cello to do popular music. Experimental contemporary music ends with the premiere and is not fated to be put on stage ever again. The audience, conductor, and orchestras will eventually go back to Beethoven. They can foresee the future of Inferno.

“Then I’ll end it. Whatever.”

Jun Huk spoke as if it is not a big deal. He was intending to end his receiving money to create something he has to take responsibility for with this anyway. He was brought all the way here with Boston Philharmonic’s fame, but it is more fitting for him to live while doing what he wants rather than working for money.

“What? End it? Ho ho. Will it be that easy?”

Amelia pinched Jun Hyuk’s lips and twisted them.

“You think you’ll be able to let go of the world’s most perfect and complete instrument when it’s been placed in your hands? Jun, you’ve already experienced it while performing Magic Flute.”

“I’m not sure. It wasn’t attractive to that extent.”

“Ah, sorry. Those kids were lacking. But it’s the Boston Philharmonic. One of the best instruments in the world. I’m pretty sure you’ll never the thrill of it.”

“Hm.....”

He had not experienced what Amelia is talking about yet. Of course he had countlessly experienced the moment when his mind and finger playing an instrument became one. The joy of feeling like 1 hour is 1 second.

Would he be able to experience something more than this with the Boston Philharmonic?

“Amelia.”

Jun Hyuk looked at Amelia flirtatiously.

“What?”

“The introduction is long. I thought you said you don’t have time. Get to the point.”

“You need to build your career. It’s something every musician needs to do.”

“A career... Specifically?”

Amelia said the fastest way to show the world Jun Hyuk’s talent.

“Submit a work to the Queen Elisabeth Competition. In the composition area.”

“What? Competition?”

The competition’s name is not taken from the British Queen Elizabeth, but from Queen Elisabeth Von Wittelsbach of Belgium.

This competition started in 1951 and is composed of 4 sections, the violin, piano, composition, and vocals. The violin, piano, and vocal sectors are alternated to be held

every 3 years while the composition sector opens every 2 years. It is held in May every year.

Participant ages are limited to under 27 for the piano and violin, and under 40 for composition. The composition portion's age limit is higher because it is thought that maturity from experiencing life's ordeals will produce better music. Most composition winners are in their thirties.

"Yeah. Submit a song that's so great it would make someone pass out. A concerto. You'll win, I'm sure. The pianist or violinist who makes it into finals plays the composition winner's song in the finals. That's where you conduct."

"Conduct too?"

"Berlin's national philharmonic takes the orchestra in the finals, but I'm sure they'll give you the baton since you already have experience with the Boston Philharmonic."

The unique aspect about this competition is that the winners who reach the finals, excluding those from the composition section, practice the selected winner from the composition section's piece for 1 week to perform it. That is why candidates for the composition section need to submit their pieces by December, and the winner is notified in January.

It is just that the win is canceled if the winner reveals the fact to the world.

It is a measure taken to ensure that the piano or violin participants do not see the score beforehand.

Since 12 finalists need to perform this, there can be at least 12 stages. In May of the next year when the contract with Boston ends, the timing is perfect to prepare for the Queen Elisabeth Competition.

"The goal isn't an experimental song like Inferno, but to show them that you're capable of composing anything. After that, you reveal all of the songs you've written. It's going to shake the world up. It'll be incomparable to what happened with Inferno. Ho ho."

The competition is just an appetizer. The main course is releasing Jun Hyuk's incredible pieces. Amelia laughs at just the thought of it.

"If your great works are revealed to the world, you'll get your first chance to conduct

a performance of your songs.”

“What? You really want your boyfriend to be a maestro? I’m no longer qualified to be your boyfriend if I just have fun and write songs once in a while?”

Amelia knows that it is a joke, but it is a welcome thought to her.

“It’s a relief for me if you say you want to rest while writing songs. Then we could always be together. Is that really what you want to do?”

“Based on how you do.”

Jun Hyuk hugged Amelia again.

Chapter 171

When Amelia completed the concerts at the 2 universities and left for Philadelphia, Jun Hyuk spent the last week of the year alone in his hotel room. The Boston Philharmonic was all for Patrick Quinn because of the special end of year concert including Christmas.

Jun Hyuk spent the month of December busy, thinking of new ways to bring out results from rehearsals. He spent all of his time in front of his piano and did not even make it to the end of year party.

At the first rehearsal of the year, Jun Hyuk discussed his new method.

“My request for you to forget the score was hard, right? You want a perfect performance, but we don’t have enough time. So we’ll have to try out a different method.”

“Is that method the piano?”

The concertmaster pointed to the piano that had not been on the stage until now.

“Yes. Starting today, I’m going to play Inferno on the piano 3 times every day.”

“Maestro. That’s...”

The concertmaster and the other members wore looks of shock. They have not been able to play even half of the 1st part. But the whole song? And 3 times in repetition? That is impossible.

“Wait a second. I have a thought. Don’t worry.”

Jun Hyuk calmed the orchestra down.

“You all just need to look at the score well. Focus only on the score since conducting is unnecessary. Since finishing is the goal, please just pass over it even if there is a mistake. You just need to keep the beat.”

Even though Jun Hyuk told them not to worry, they kept murmuring amongst themselves.

“Alright. Everyone quiet down and do as the Maestro says. I think he’ll be showing us magic again today.”

Concertmaster Matthew Price calmed the orchestra down and spoke to Jun Hyuk,

“Maestro. Can we use a metronome? If we are to keep the beat without conducting, I think we’ll need the metronome.”

“Oh, that’s a good idea. I’m sure everyone has a metronome app on their phones.”

The majority of the orchestra members turned their phones on again and made a buzz to get ready. Jun Hyuk sat in front of the piano.

“Alright. Shall we start?”

With Jun Hyuk’s signal, everyone started playing with the first note. Starting at the 2nd measure, Jun Hyuk came in on the piano.

Everyone witnessed magic again. They are sure that they are looking at the same score, but a different music is coming out. As the piano increased, the orchestra’s sound just became an accompaniment for the piano. Inferno’s terrible melody disappeared and an entirely different piano concerto rang out through the theater.

The orchestra did not lose track of the score or go off beat. Instead, there was even a member who almost dropped his instrument in surprise when the song was changed completely with just the addition of a piano melody.

The uncomfortable sound of Inferno disappeared from the members’ minds and they only heard the piano melody. Jun Hyuk did not look once at the orchestra, did not take his eyes off of the piano keys, and focused only on playing.

The 1st part was over within moments. Jun Hyuk did not rest and put his hand up to alert them of the start of the 2nd part. With this signal, the orchestra went into the 2nd part. They understood the maestro’s intent. They are going to go through all of the parts without stopping.

After 40 minutes of a completely new music was over, most let out a long sigh. No one

spoke.

However, there was no time to enjoy the aftertaste of the piano melody or novelty of the magic. Jun Hyuk sent a signal with his hand to repeat the 1st part.

Since the orchestra was used to the piano melody, they were confident that they could give a more mature performance. But the magic of the maestro in front of the piano was not over. It was not the same piano melody.

If the first piano was like a sad sob, the melody now is solemn and reminiscent of Bach's Cantus. The 3 performances Jun Hyuk mentioned were of different melodies.

After the 3 performances over 2 hours, their mental fatigue was greater than their physical. They had performed while thinking about what melody would be up next, so they were exhausted.

Jun Hyuk's state was not sound either. From the way he wiped the sweat off of his forehead as he stood up from the piano, they could tell that he had performed with much difficulty.

For a moment, neither the orchestra nor Jun Hyuk could say a word. Tara had been watching from backstage and fell to the ground without being able to get up even though she needs to give Jun Hyuk a towel to wipe his sweat.

"Alright. I think we might be able to forget the entire song with this kind of method..."

Jun Hyuk could not continue speaking. All of the orchestra members suddenly rose from their seats and started clapping. It was not passionate like that of an audience, but there was sincerity in their clapping.

Their clapping is not in regards to the piano melody or the disappearance of the terrible sound of Inferno. It is a tribute to Jun Hyuk's endless talent and his helping them perform the song in such a way.

"Why are you being like this. Stop and sit down. I haven't finished talking."

The orchestra members saw Jun Hyuk's embarrassed expression and sat down to listen.

"I think my method worked. First, there won't be a problem with recording the album

like this. Right?”

In one way, it is just an arrangement. An arrangement where the original song has a twist with the piano. But the result is not that it is a piano song, but that an entirely different song was born. As Jun Hyuk said, they are not forgetting the original song but remembering a new piano concerto.

They can listen to the piano melody through earphones in the recording studio. The amazing sound engineer will take care of balancing the variance of the sounds the orchestra makes through their instruments and the piano melody.

“From now on when you practice alone, listen to the piano melody. Oh. You only have to use the 3 songs that you heard today, today and tomorrow. I’ll bring a properly made piano song to our next rehearsal.”

“Maestro. What do you mean properly made? The 3 songs today are perfect. We didn’t think of the original song at all and felt like we were playing an entirely different song.”

The 3 songs were all perfect piano concertos that did not need anything else. There are a lot of shortcomings to call them great works, but they have done more than enough to achieve the goal of making them forget the original song.

Concertmaster Matthew Price thought that it might be Jun Hyuk’s ambition as a composer to create a better piece.

“Oh. The 3 songs that I prepared today were just tests.”

“Tests?”

“Yes. They were tests to see how your performance would change according to the twist with the piano. If we take out the piano in today’s performances, they are just of Inferno. This is also my first time hearing the entire song. But none of them were the Inferno that I want.”

The skill to listen to a piano concerto while taking out the piano part. It is impressive, but they were no longer surprised.

“What is the Inferno that you want?”

“I can’t express it exactly, but I want to leave a slight room.”

“Room? What does that mean?”

“If the 1st part of Inferno that the Berlin Philharmonic performed was a darkness, I am trying to plant a very small light in there.”

None of the orchestra members had heard Berlin Philharmonic’s performance. But they could understand what Jun Hyuk meant. They had experienced the darkness that Jun Hyuk spoke of with their bodies while practicing the song.

With today’s experiment, Jun Hyuk gained a lot of confidence. He felt like he could achieve his goal before the end of the season.

“We’ll record the album in January. The secretary’s office will figure out the recording schedule. I’m thinking of increasing the number of rehearsals we have until then. There might not be enough time because we still have the regular concerts... but can we rehearse for a few hours over the weekend?”

Jun Hyuk brought it up cautiously and examined the members’ faces. Their reactions showed that he need not worry. The concertmaster and members nodded. A challenge is a joy.

The next day when Patrick Quinn heard about the day’s events from the concertmaster, he hit his head.

“Darn. I missed that great moment. Then that means he’ll bring a complete piano song to tomorrow’s rehearsal. I don’t think I can miss out on that no matter what.”

“Maestro. Maestro Jun asked me to tell you to refrain from coming to rehearsals.”

“What? Is it off limits for me?”

Patrick Quinn frowned.

“That’s basically what it means. He blocked his secretary, Tara, from entering the stage as well.”

Patrick Quinn mumbled with a face full of regret.

“Well... I guess I made too much of a fuss. I should have just watched quietly.”

“That wasn’t a fuss, that was wonderment. Anyone would have done the same.”

The piano song that Jun Hyuk prepared again could be seen as inferior to the first 3 songs. It is dull and a boring performance continued for 40 minutes without change. Even the members complained that it is so boring it makes the song difficult to play.

Jun Hyuk was the only person to look satisfied.

“We’re almost there. As long as there aren’t little mistakes, we could record as immediately as tomorrow. Alright. Shall we try it again? This time, play while following my conducting.”

Jun Hyuk conducted the orchestra while playing the piano.

He had the piano at the piano and played both roles like famous pianist and 10 year conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim.

Conducting means constantly leading the orchestra’s sound and urging them to bring out the desired sound.

Until now, Jun Hyuk had only said nice things, but he started to become critical.

“First violin. I won’t say who it is, but you were half a pitch higher 3 times. I expect that you won’t continue this kind of mistake.”

“Why are all of the horns late? I’m not talking about the beat. Play with a bit more speed.”

“Hang on. Everyone needs to get used to conversion. In measures 27 to 34, you completely ignored the dynamic conversion I talked about. It may be a mechanical performance, but that machine is faulty if it cannot keep up with conversions.”

Jun Hyuk’s razor sharp criticisms made the orchestra realize one thing. They had only just taken off their trainers. They are just performers who can only play according to the new score they received, but there is still a long way before they can express the music in the way that the maestro wants.

In front of them are not just weekends that they need to give up, but days of practicing late into the night.

2 weeks after the January that Jun Hyuk had expected to finish recording the album, they started preparing to record in Boston Philharmonic's own record label BSO Classics in the middle of February.

Over 3 days before recording, Jun Hyuk had meetings with BSO Classics' producer and sound engineers.

"We're going to use 5 omnidirectional microphones and 3 T stands."

Omnidirectional mics are hung in the center of a theater to record even the entire ringing, while T stands are T-shaped stands equipped with 3 mics. It has the role of picking up on even the finest sounds.

This method is also known as Decca Tree, and was developed by record label Decca to order classical music.

The producer and sound engineers briefed Jun Hyuk on the overall notes on the recording.

"Then that means there will be a total of 14 soundtracks. Won't mixing be a bother? Since this song isn't grand like typical classics, it'll be easier to work on the 2nd half with just 2 omnidirectional mics and 2 T stands."

"Ha ha. Maestro, you don't need to take that much into mind for us. That's our job."

The producer laughed at Jun Hyuk's unexpected words. He is the first maestro who pays mind to their workload for the 2nd half.

"Uh, I have a question."

"Yes. What is it?"

"Are you all just engineers? Or are you lovers of music who enjoy classical?"

"What's necessary to say? We chose this job because we love classical music."

Top sound engineers are bound to have a profound knowledge of music. Jun Hyuk is not asking this because he doubts their abilities. He had actually wanted them to be outsiders to music.

“Then you know that this recording will be of Inferno, right?”

“Of course. Isn’t it the top news these days? Our anticipations are very high too because we will be the first to record Inferno.”

“When Berlin Philharmonic performed the 1st part, the entire audience left. You know that, right?”

“Of course. Isn’t that why we’re so curious?”

“I was there, and it wasn’t just leaving. The audience ran away.”

The producer realized what Jun Hyuk is worrying about.

“We already heard the terrible reputation that Inferno has.”

The producer already saw the score for Inferno. Though it was a rough time, his expectations for the music rose.

“No. You don’t know. How can you work on something that the performers themselves can’t listen to when you need to listen to it hundreds of times?”

The producer finally realized what Jun Hyuk intended to do.

“What? Then do you mean...?”

“Yes. I was thinking of doing the mixing myself.”

When Jun Hyuk was done talking, everyone just blinked speechless. Since they started working in this field, this is the first time they heard a maestro say that he would do the 2nd half of the work.

“Don’t worry. I basically lived in a recording studio for 2 months. I can work with most equipment.”

Jun Hyuk saw their frowning faces and did not bring up the work on the 2nd half any longer. They will come to understand when it comes time.

“Even if it’s not that, you can reduce the number of microphones. And please cover the left and right walls of the concert hall with a thick fabric that can absorb sound. We

need to force a light feeling rather than grandeur.”

“Sure.”

The producer seemed to be uncomfortable with Jun Hyuk’s increasingly rigid requests and his expression grew darker.

“And the earphones?”

“They’ve been prepared already. There are enough for all of the members of the orchestra.”

“Alright. Thank you so much.”

Jun Hyuk ended the meeting and stood up. They will record over 3 days. He did not say anymore because he trusted that they would know what he is talking about after the first test recording.



On the day of the 1st recording, the stage was full with 8 microphones and complex wires. The orchestra’s earphones were tangled on the floor, and there was nowhere to step.

“So we’re finally recording.”

“I’ll say. I had half a doubt at first, but.....”

“No one knows until the recording is over.”

Chairman Mark Boff and the Board members are sitting in the back of the audience so as not to miss out on this event. Regardless of the success of the recording, they want to hear the much talked about Inferno for themselves.

Jun Hyuk checked the volume on each and every earphone. The piano sound in their ears and the orchestra’s sound in the theater need to have the same volume. If there is even the slightest difference in sound for the piano, it will inevitably go wrong.

“Boston’s young maestro is so meticulous that he checks the sound himself. It isn’t

fitting for the appearance of a young genius.”

“He even said that he would do the mixing himself.”

“Excuse me? The mixing?”

“Yes. That’s what the producer told me. We’ll have to put an additional article in the contract. Jun will become the producer.”

Patrick Quinn could understand why Jun Hyuk said that he would do the studio work himself. It is because anyone who can hear will have trouble listening to this song all the way to the end.

Patrick Quinn’s thoughts were not wrong in any aspect. They started the rehearsal and test recording and when the 1st part was over, none of the Board members had stayed in their seats.

Even the sound engineers who needed to check on the state of the recording, had left. The only people who stayed in the theater were Patrick Quinn and the producer, with the veins showing in their foreheads.

When they finished playing through the 2nd part, the producer had left and only Patrick Quinn was left in his seat. He looked much more comfortable than he had during the 1st part. As the 2nd part was ending, he could not endure it any longer and was going to leave the theater.

There was a greater difference than he thought between reading the score and hearing the song in person.

In that moment, Patrick Quinn’s thoughts on Inferno had changed. It has an incredible value, but it is not music. He decided to make the conclusion that they had just used the orchestra to experiment with sound.

When he was about to get up, the sound changed. The sound began to change into music. The 1st part was just darkness. There was nothing different in the 2nd either. But as the 2nd part was ending, a very small light came through. At that moment, Patrick Quinn sat down again.

The 3rd and 4th parts were the journey to find that weak light. There is anxiety and fear, but that ray of light allows them to overcome that fear.

At the end of the 4th part, there is the hope that they have escaped that darkness and can go out into the bright world. But the music ended without showing that bright world. Inferno has an ending that ends with the hope.

Chapter 172

“You all worked hard. We’ll start the official recording in 2 hours. Is that okay?”

The orchestra could tell that the rehearsal had gone perfectly. They knew that if it had not been perfect, that young maestro would not have gone straight through to the 4th part.

Over the past month, the orchestra could understand how Jun Hyuk could write this devil-like song. It is because the composer is a devil. This is the nickname that stuck with Jun Hyuk.

At first, he had been lofty and glossed over small mistakes. But as they kept repeating the performance, he did not lose a single mistake and began to point them out. Everyone had been speechless when he even pointed out the state of an instrument.

“3rd horn, you’ll have to go to the instrument premium and have your trumpets taken care of. The crystalline metals are too bunched. There is a lucid sound.”

The trumpet section of the brass instruments need to be touched up lightly with a wooden hammer twice a year. Just as leather is tanned, it is done to maintain its softness.

No matter how Jun Hyuk acted like a devil, they had no choice but to listen. Without the piano’s aid, they would not be able to perform the song properly and the only person who interprets the song precisely is the conductor.

Since that kind of conductor ended the rehearsal in one try, it meant that the performance had been to the conductor’s liking.

Jun Hyuk came down from the stage and ran to the recording control box.

“What do you think? Is it okay?”

Inside the control box, the producer and sound engineers were red-faced and silent.

Jun Hyuk saw their expressions and smiled.

“Until where did you hear it?”

“It’ll be around the middle of the 2nd part. Well, I’m really embarrassed. I thought it couldn’t be.....”

The producer could not look at Jun Hyuk properly and would not meet his eyes.

“It’s okay. I’ll hear about the circumstances later. I’d like to check it now.”

“Yes, Maestro.”

An engineer held out headphones. Jun Hyuk listened to all 4 parts carefully before taking the headphones off.

“I think it came out well. It’s okay.”

The producer was even more embarrassed because all he had done was to push the start button to record, but Jun Hyuk was saying that it had come out well.

“How is the state of the microphones? That’s all I can do for you right now.”

Jun Hyuk went back on the stage with the producer.

“Please move mic number 1 here. The violin was a bit weak.”

The producer did not say a word, and sent signals to the control box with his hands. He had not listened to the music and cannot be so bold as to give an opinion. Once the mic was repositioned, Jun Hyuk spoke to the producer,

“You don’t need to stay. We just need to get the start and end.”

“Whew – So this is what you meant last time. I really was confident... I didn’t know it’d be to this extent.”

The producer shook his head. He had not been able to listen to the music so even he found it ridiculous to produce it. He was going to pass the producer role on to Jun Hyuk and just be an engineer.

After Jun Hyuk changed the positions of the mics a little, he looked satisfied. Patrick Quinn had waited until Jun Hyuk completed setting everything up and came on the

stage.

“Jun. Do you know who the first person to listen to the entirety of Inferno is?”

Jun Hyuk laughed and pointed at Patrick Quinn.

“Ha ha. That’s right. I’m going to make sure I write this on my Twitter.”

“Do you have things like that too?”

“I’m a billboard for the Boston Philharmonic. I have to do a bit of everything.”

“That’s true. What did you think?”

Patrick Quinn thought for a moment and started with a firm conclusion.

“There won’t be an argument on whether it is music or noise anymore. It’s definitely music.”

“And?”

“Um... I want to say that it’s a masterpiece of misfortune.”

“Ha ha. It would have been perfect if it were just a masterpiece... I see you didn’t like it since you added in the misfortune.”

Jun Hyuk could understand the hidden meaning in Patrick Quinn’s evaluation. It means that Inferno is fated not to have any listeners.

“No. It’s a masterpiece to me, but it’ll be difficult for most people to find the true qualities in the music. They’ll need to listen through to the end of the 2nd part to know that value.”

“Then it’s fine. This song is just a personal consolation. I’m satisfied if at least one person gives it a good evaluation. And since that one person is you, there’s nothing more I can ask for.”

“I won’t be the only person who sees this as a masterpiece. There will be various evaluations, but I’m sure you won’t really be bothered by them.”

“That’s true, but I can’t hide the fact that they do bother me a bit.”

“Ha ha. Are you saying you want more fame? You still don’t have enough?”

“More than fame, I’d rather receive favorable criticism since it is my first symphony.”

“Beethoven’s No. 5 Fate symphony, Mozart’s Figaro’s Wedding, Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring. They were all criticized severely. They’ll know one day.”

He is not looking for an evaluation like those of the works that Patrick Quinn mentioned. He would be satisfied with hearing that it was a decent experiment.

“That’s that, but how are the results of the rehearsal? Is it okay?”

“The producer said that the recording is normally done 3 or 4 times, but I think we’ll be fine with 2.”

“Since your conducting is precise, it’ll end quickly. Then work hard.”

Patrick Quinn pat Jun Hyuk’s shoulder and went back.

“I guess you’re satisfied enough that you don’t need to listen to it again.”

“I’ve discovered the essence of this music, so I’m going to enjoy it through the album now. With a freedom of mind.”

“Yes. I’d like to thank you. You are my first audience.”

Patrick Quinn squeezed his shoulder and left the theater.

Now, they started the 1st recording without a single person listening. The producer transmitted the piano song on Jun Hyuk’s signal and started the recording.

They recorded the performance twice and the 1st day of recording was done. He will check today’s recording and then decide on recording again. The orchestra would go back and rest, but Jun Hyuk went to the BSO Classics studio to work on mastering the album. Jun Hyuk was a savior to the producer and 2 sound engineers.

After putting the recording file through all of the systems, Jun Hyuk turned to the producer and engineers.

“For now, just go back. I’ll listen to everything that was recorded today and decide on the direction to take.”

“Huh? All of it? By track? But that’ll take about 20 hours.”

“Yeah. Well, well. I guess you all didn’t believe me. I told you I lived in a recording studio for over 2 years. Ha ha. Don’t worry and go back. I’ll tell you when it’s over.”

“Maestro.”

Tara is restless while looking at Jun Hyuk laugh. The maestro only needs to perform. Spend the night up in the recording studio? It is something bizarre that she has never heard of before.

“Tara, you go back too. There won’t be anything for you to do here. Oh, just get me a ton of Chinese food. Plus 3 or 4 pies of pizza.”

Jun Hyuk quickly put on his headphones and turned his attention to the sound check monitor in order to avoid Tara’s nagging.

Chapter 173

[Hey]

When the producer opened the door to the recording studio after a day, he found Jun Hyuk passed out on the sofa. He stepped quietly to sit in front of the console box and look over the console box, but saw a notebook full of writing.

“Oh, you’re here?”

“Oh no. I woke you up.”

The producer gently put the notebook down and looked over Jun Hyuk’s complexion. He clearly shows that he is still young. Other than his messy frizzy hair, nothing shows that he is tired.

“It’s okay. I just laid down to rest for a second.”

Jun Hyuk rose from the sofa and made a cup on the espresso machine while stretching.

“Maestro, this notebook?”

The producer held the notebook out to Jun Hyuk.

“Yes. I organized the 24 tracks. You can just mix the tracks as is written there.”

The mixing guide written in the notebook makes it so that they do not have to listen to the music. The times to cut and mix are written in detail. He had made it so that all they have to do is look at the track waves on the monitor to mechanically cut and paste.

The producer looked through the notes and found a missing part.

“The 2nd part is missing. Will you be recording it again?”

“Yes. There was nothing I could do about the 2nd part. We’ll have to record it again.”

Jun Hyuk was drinking his coffee when something suddenly came to mind, making

him set down his cup.

“Oh right. I wanted to release this album only as an SACD (Super Audio CD).”

“Huh? Just an SACD? Are you saying you won’t release it as a regular CD at all?”

“It’s just an idea because it’s not something I can make the final decision on. The sound’s range is 110db. The sampling frequency came out as high as 1,400 MHz.”

An SACD is a HiFi CD. It plays a dense sound firmly and clearly, but it is less smooth than normal CDs to give the sound a sharper feeling.

The reason why record labels try to avoid SACDs is that they can only be played on a specific player, which only music manias own. When thinking about the sales, it is right to launch in all forms.

“I decoded it a bit and listened, but a normal CD is too soft.”

The producer could tell that this composer wants to deliver the vividness – no – the cruelty of the scene. The producer also wants to capture the best sound. He completely agrees with Jun Hyuk’s thoughts, but it is a great loss in terms of sales.

This album has the value to reach platinum out of sheer curiosity. But if only the SACD is sold, the sales could end with about 1/10.

When the producer hesitated, Jun Hyuk spoke again,

“It’s just an opinion. The record label will decide.”

It was Tara who saved the producer who was still in an uncomfortable situation. She entered the room with coffee and a bagel.

“You came just on time, Tara. We need to record the 2nd part again, so get that in the schedule for us. Anytime after tomorrow morning is fine.”

Jun Hyuk took the bagel and chewed off a big bite. Working all night brings hunger.

“Don’t you have to go back to the hotel first?”

All Tara wants to do is push Jun Hyuk to bed.

“Yes. I’ll wash up and rest a bit. Let me know as soon as the recording time is confirmed.”

When Jun Hyuk left, the producer quickly used the track to compare with Jun Hyuk’s notes. He sighed a few times and then started to mumble quietly.

“It’s said that New York Philharmonic’s Zubin Mehta (tenure 1978-1991) performed without even a second of error to create the same running time. This kid is worse.”

“Why?”

“He cut the track into 1/100 second units. What’s more is that the running times for the 3 songs are exact to the 1/100th second. With this kind of dissonance. It means that his analysis of the song is complete, but his listening isn’t on human standards.”

Jun Hyuk may not have the knowledge of a veteran sound engineer but he does have that of an engineer with a few years experience. Combine that with his natural ability and he is the hardest maestro to work with.



When Jun Hyuk opened his eyes in the hotel, it was dawn. Looking outside the window, a bright light reflected in the midst of city lights and there was a flurry of snow.

He had realized something for sure while working on the recording. It is difficult for the Boston Symphony to hold a concert. When they record, there is no audience. Jun Hyuk is not shameless enough to have the orchestra face their audience with earphones in.

Jun Hyuk looked at his watch to check the time in Korea and got his cellphone.

“Sir.”

“Huh? Jun Hyuk. Why are you calling so early in the morning? No, it must be dawn over there.”

“Yes. We actually started recording today.”

“What? Inferno? So, how’s it going? Did it come out well?”

Yoon Kwang Hun's voice is excited over the phone. He is full of anticipation because it is Jun Hyuk's first time recording as a conductor of an orchestra.

"Yes. It came out almost exactly how I wanted it to."

"Really? If it came out how you wanted it to, that means it's really hard to listen to isn't it? Ha ha."

It became more difficult for Jun Hyuk to bring it up when he heard Yoon Kwang Hun's laughter, but he brought up the courage.

"Sir. I don't think I'll be able to keep my word. I can't send a concert ticket. Sorry."

"....."

Yoon Kwang Hun did not say anything, so Jun Hyuk imagined his disappointment in Jun Hyuk. But the continued words are his ever warm words.

"Alright. You worked hard. It's okay since you did your money's worth. Honestly, I thought it'd be too much to expect a performance. And that's when I can't even read the score."

Hearing Yoon Kwang Hun's bright voice, Jun Hyuk thought of the Yoon Kwang Hun who always encouraged him and teared up but he calmed his voice.

"I'll send you the album as soon as it comes out."

"Alright. I'll keep that CD unopened. I don't have the courage to open it. Ha ha. Then are you going back to New York now?"

"Yes. After the extra recording tomorrow, I won't have anything else to do."

"What are you going to do there?"

"He he. I don't have any plans."

"Okay. Spend some time doing nothing for now. Just make sure you're eating well."

Once he received Yoon Kwang Hun's understanding and encouragement, his heart felt much more lightened.

Chapter 174

[He's a real star]

When the orchestra gathered again and heard that they would only need to record the 2nd part, they felt assured. They are bound to feel that it had been a successful performance because it was rare for them to finish recording with just the rehearsal and 3 performances.

“The reason why we are only recording the 2nd part again is because my expectations for the 3rd part are a bit low. I listened to the recording several times and it wasn't an issue of technicality but the strings blocked the oboes' flow. I thought it'd be okay because of the positioning of the mic... but tricks really don't work in music.”

Jun Hyuk spread out the part of the score that he had not been satisfied with and explained what the problem was multiple times before picking up the baton.

Unlike the day before, he stopped conducting during rehearsal if anything was off to add in a more detailed explanation. They started recording after rehearsing the 2nd part for 2 hours.

After performing, Jun Hyuk checked the recording in the control box and came back onto the stage. Seeing his expression, the orchestra members also became bright.

“We'll end the recording of Inferno with this. You all worked really hard.”

Jun Hyuk bowed respectfully to the orchestra from the podium. They responded with clapping to show their gratefulness. But the clapping did not last for long.

Normally, the conductor would come down from the podium, shake the hands of each member, and all go to a bar. But Jun Hyuk did not come down from the podium. He still has something left to say.

When the clapping quieted down, Jun Hyuk began to speak,

“Conducting for the Boston Symphony Orchestra has been the best experience. On top of that, it was my song and not Beethoven's or Tchaikovsky's. You were all the best

players.”

Jun Hyuk bowed his head again. However, the smiles disappeared from the members’ faces. They did not hear this as a simple thanks from Jun Hyuk.

“I don’t know if the day will come when I will get to conduct for you again, but I would like to tell you that today is the last.”

Everyone became startled that it would be the last. Why all of a sudden? Their faces all looked to be full of this question.

“Maestro! What are you talking about? The last day? There is still the concert.”

The concertmaster spoke on behalf of everyone.

“Concertmaster. Are you confident?”

“Excuse me?”

“I’m asking if you have the confidence to perform within 5 months. I don’t.”

“What does that mean? Why are you saying you don’t have the confidence when we’ve even finished recording?”

Jun Hyuk picked up the earphones sitting on the floor.

“Do you have the confidence to perform without these earphones?”

Jun Hyuk’s words are heart breaking. No one can respond.

“The orchestra listens to earphones, playing a piano concerto while the audience listens to an entirely different symphony? That’s comedic.”

The members remembered what they had been forgetting.

The audience makes up the 3rd orchestra members from below the stage.

Performing an entirely different song from the audience members to match is trickery. The young maestro reminded them of this.

They were all silent when Jun Hyuk spoke again,

“I’ve never thought that you are lacking in ability. The fact that performing is difficult is just a characteristic of this song. It’s no different from a strange song that asks for an incredibly fast performance or one that requires help unless the player has extra fingers.”

Jun Hyuk’s words that he had never suspected the Boston Philharmonic’s abilities are sincere.

“If someone can figure out a way to perform my song properly, that is an undeserved honor. I need to wait for that day to come. Inferno’s premiere is beyond ability. My role ends here.”

Even though Jun Hyuk was done speaking, none of the members spoke. The conductor and composer had declared that it is impossible, and they have nothing to refute this. It really does end here.

Jun Hyuk came down from the podium and held his hand out to Concertmaster Matthew Price. The Concertmaster took Jun Hyuk’s hand but instead of shaking it, he pulled Jun Hyuk into an embrace.

He pat Jun Hyuk’s back and whispered,

“Jun, you are forever my maestro.”



“Maestro, you can’t do this. You even succeeded in the recording. Why are you quitting now?”

Tara had been waiting outside the stage and made a fuss. She wanted to run out immediately when Jun Hyuk made his outrageous announcement, but she had been pushing back the instinct.

“Tara, stop. It’s a fact that even the orchestra has accepted. There cannot be the deception of listening to a piano song while performing.”

“There’s still time left. If you work a little harder...”

“If it had been possible, the orchestra would have said it first. Everyone knows that it’s impossible.”

Jun Hyuk urged going to Board Chairman Mark Boff’s office. As Tara followed him, all she thought was that she needs to stop him but she cannot find the words.

When he entered the office, Mark Boff and Patrick Quinn were inside drinking coffee.

“Good. You are both here.”

“Oh Jun. The recording is done already?”

“Yes. It ended early today because it was just the rerecording for the 2nd part.”

“So the Inferno album is finally coming out. You did well, Maestro.”

Mark Boff looked happier than anyone else. He would have never dreamed of bringing Jun Hyuk, who does not have a single aspect of Patrick Quinn’s career, in as visiting conductor. But it is a successful gamble. He had created an album that would easily surpass 1 million in sales. If the performance is put on stage, Boston Philharmonic’s fame will go up a step.

However, Jun Hyuk’s words made all of his expectations come crashing down.

“I’m really sorry to say this so suddenly. I will resign as visiting conductor today.”

“What are you talking about? All of a sudden?”

The two men simultaneously jumped up from their seats. They could not believe that these words were coming from someone who had just completed recording. This is something that they would hear if a recording was a failure.

“I want to tell you that I’m unable to do the performance.”

“What? Jun! What on earth are you talking about? What do you mean you can’t do the performance?”

Patrick Quinn’s face turned bright red.

“I’ll return the money and expenses spent on me. I don’t know the details of the

contract, but if there are penalties for not fulfilling it, I will pay those as well.”

His clerical tone of speaking to Mark Boff showed that he has no intention of changing his mind.

“Wa – wait. Jun. It’s... It’s not time to be talking about stuff like that. You just completed recording the album. Wh – why are you being like this all of a sudden?”

Chairman Mark Boff was so surprised that he was even stuttering.

“A performance means feeling a realism that is different from listening to the album. But Inferno’s performance will not come out as well as the album does. And that’s while using weird shortcuts.”

Jun Hyuk carefully explained how he had come to make this decision.

“Even if we practice in this state for a few more months, we won’t be able to perform without the aid of the piano song. And it’s blasphemy if the orchestra performs to the audience with earphones in.”

It is what he already said to the orchestra and it is a bitter truth that they have accepted. What Jun Hyuk is trying to say is that the performance is impossible.

Patrick Quinn had been listening quietly when his face started brightening up and he suddenly laughed.

“Ha ha. Jun. You’re really interesting. Or is it that you’re smart? No, you’re not shrewd enough to calculate all of this. Is it an instinct? A star’s instinct?”

“Excuse me? What do you mean by instinct?”

Mark Boff was bewildered by Patrick Quinn. It would fall short to speak to Jun Hyuk and convince him to come back, but what is this absurdity?

“A real star doesn’t hesitate to act. They just move as their hearts tell them to. They don’t plan according to what they think the public will think. But the public becomes enthusiastic and follows them constantly.”

“Patrick. Say it simply. I don’t know what you’re saying. Didn’t you just say that I’m not shrewd?”

“If you say you won’t perform, I’m pretty sure the passion over Inferno among conductors won’t settle down. Everyone’s going to come running in at the bait of a premiere.”

Mark Boff finally understood what Patrick Quinn was trying to say. It is not over yet. No, it might even fire up.

“Ah, since the album came out.....”

“That’s right, Mark. It means there are 2 references now. The score and album. Each person will look at the score and listen to the album to interpret the composer’s intent.”

As long as it is still a hot topic, the center of that will always be Jun Hyuk and the Boston Philharmonic. Jun Hyuk with the score, the Boston Philharmonic with the album.

“If Jun had done the performance, the drive changes. No matter who performs, they are second. The album came out and the premiere was held. It’ll just become one of many pieces of contemporary music. Even if others perform it, it’ll always be compared to Jun Hyuk’s. This is why the first is so important.”

It is the same as leaving Inferno as a mathematical challenge. If a mathematical challenge is solved, the world stops caring. When it remains as a challenge, the world’s attention never goes away.

“I was the one who wanted to make the first attempt. Honestly when I heard Jun say that he doesn’t want to perform, I became greedy on the thought of making the premiere.”

Mark Boff and Jun Hyuk were thinking something entirely different from what Patrick Quinn was saying. Chairman Mark Boff was thinking of the incredible financial benefits that would come in if the world never stopped caring. Jun Hyuk of the incredible situation that was unfolding without his intent.

However, he decided not to care what other people thought. It is out of his hands anyway.

“Then I’ll tell you what I want to do, so please handle it that way.”

The two men no longer discouraged Jun Hyuk. Bringing up the contract means that he has already made up his mind. Is there another person who does as he pleases as a maestro?

“Then what do you want to do?”

“First, I’m thinking of going back to New York. I’ll have to go back and think about it.”

“When are you going to leave?”

“I leave tomorrow. Staying any longer is strange.”

“What? Why are you in such a rush?”

Patrick Quinn wanted to spend some time with Jun Hyuk freely. This young genius brings him new inspiration just by being together.

“Well, I don’t even have anything to do.”

“We have to throw a farewell party. You can’t just leave like this.”

“I’m not used to things like that.”

He did not back down from resigning, so he would not change his mind from something so small. It is not even an eternal farewell and they would reunite as quickly as possible.

Jun Hyuk would be quick to leave, but Tara played her role until the end. She took care of everything from packing his bags to the hotel checkout, airline ticket, and dropping him off at the airport.

“I would like to work with you again. Goodbye, Jun.”

Tara kissed him lightly on the cheek before he left.

Chapter 175

[Returning home home]

Jun Hyuk came back to the New York apartment and started by cleaning. The doorbell rang while he was in the middle of sweeping and scrubbing. When he opened the door, lawyer Lim So Mi was holding bags in both hands. She had so many that even the condo security guard had come up with some.

“Huh? Ms. Lim. What are you doing here?”

“What do you mean why am I here? Hurry up and take these. My arms are going to fall off.”

When Jun Hyuk took the bags, she tipped the security guard and entered the living room.

“Wow, this house is great. Even grand pianos. Rich people really are different. Ho ho.”

She took a lap around the apartment and then opened the kitchen refrigerator as though it is her own house.

“I knew it. You did leave the house empty for half a year. Tsk tsk.”

Lawyer Lim So Mi threw out all of the dry and rotten food in the refrigerator, and started filling it with what she had brought over.

“Rest a bit. I’ll make food. I went grocery shopping. It’s been a while since you ate tonkatsu, right?”

Jun Hyuk jumped up from the sofa and waved his hand.

“Oh, Ms. Lim. I don’t need tonkatsu. I don’t feel so good because of the flight... I think a stew might be better.”

“Really? Then I’ll make you kimchi stew.”

Lawyer Lim So Mi made some noise in the kitchen and then put a decent looking stew in front of Jun Hyuk. Kimchi stew, a few side dishes, and even noodles.

But there was no difference between the tonkatsu and the stew. Jun Hyuk forced himself to eat the kimchi he was sure she had purchased at the Korean market.

Lawyer Lim So Mi watched Jun Hyuk eat and cautiously asked,

“But why did you give up all of a sudden?”

“I didn’t really have confidence in the performance. And that doesn’t mean that I can be nonchalant with the Boston Philharmonic.”

“Hm. This is the first time I’ve seen you say you don’t have confidence in something.”

“I could understand better while trying it out. Oh right. I’m sure you were put in an uncomfortable situation because of me.”

“Why? What’s uncomfortable?”

“Issues with the contract.....”

Lawyer Lim So Mi laughed and shook her head.

“It’s okay. I took the money from Boston monthly anyway. There was nothing more to receive and nothing to pay up. And the recording and performance weren’t mandatory conditions anyway... Actually, the Boston Philharmonic thanked you.”

“What are they thanking me for?”

“You recorded the album. I hear things too. They’re saying that’s going to be big.”

In Korean circles, there is a lot of talk that Lim So Mi caught a big fish. There are a lot of rumors that there will be tremendous contracts going forward.

When Jun Hyuk put his spoon down, she cleared the table. She pushed him away when he said that he would help, and told him to go rest.

“Jun Hyuk.”

“Yes.”

Lim So Mi wiped the table as she took a glance at Jun Hyuk.

“You look really tired.”

“No, I’m okay. I slept a lot in first class.”

“Not that, but I mean to take a break from music. I’m telling you to take a break from work.”

“I rested while on the Europe trip. For 2 months.”

“Just like it’s not a vacation if you’re thinking of your work, you need to forget music to rest. How many songs did you write while traveling Europe?”

Lim So Mi tsked as Jun Hyuk started counting on his fingers.

“Why don’t you go to Korea to take a break before coming back? Hasn’t it been over 1 year since you’ve seen Mr. Yoon?”

“Yes.”

“Aren’t you like father and son? You should see each other at least once a year.”

He did not really have anything to do, so he could go to Korea. He thought that everything in Korea was over when he left it.

However, Lim So Mi’s suggestion made him recall a lot.

The coziness of the cafe. The basement studio. Talking about music with Yoon Kwang Hun over a cup of coffee. More than anything else, the tonkatsu that Yoon Kwang Hun makes for him.

“And you have to leave anyway. You can’t stay here for very long.”

“Excuse me? What are you talking about? It’s my house.”

“The Boston Philharmonic is going to release an official statement in 10 days. Plans to release the Inferno album and your resignation. Then reporters will come flooding in.”

He had done something to receive attention again. Jun Hyuk thought that it would be better to go back to Korea as Lim So Mi said, rather than staying holed up in a hotel somewhere in New York.

“You don’t have plans anyway. Go to Korea for about a month and... Oy. I’m no good at talking around the point.”

Lim So Mi stopped washing the dishes, wiped her hands, and sat next to Jun Hyuk while sighing.

“Why do you think I came with all of this food? Mr. Yoon worried a lot about you. He asked me to stop in and check on you.”

“Ah, I see. No wonder.”

“What? No wonder? Hey! I’m always this nice! How many times have I made bone marrow soup for you?”

It was not often, but she did bring him soup and kimchi which is easy to prepare when he does not really have anything to eat. Even though he did throw away about half of it because he did not make sure to eat it on time.

“If you want to go to Korea, I could even prepare a private plane for you.”

“What? A private plane?”

Jun Hyuk’s eyes grew wide at this ridiculous statement.

“There’s someone who wants to meet you, but it’s business. Mr. Yoon already met him once too.”

If it is someone who would meet Yoon Kwang Hun, it must be serious business. What could it be?

“Who is it?”

“Stern Corporation’s president. It’s a management agency. It’s a pretty big company in the industry. I looked into it too and it looks good.”

“Ah, I’ve heard about it too. But you’re taking care of my affairs. I don’t need a

management agency.”

“What do I do other than look over your contracts? It’s a world where even an artist needs to meet a good agent to sell his paintings. They’ll take care of you completely. Look at what’s happening now. It’s even uncomfortable trying to avoid reporters. They’ll take of everything like this too.”

“Is that why they’re saying they’ll lend us a private plane? For me?”

“I heard he needs to go to Japan soon. He can drop you off in Korea and go on to Japan. You can discuss during the plane ride.”

Jun Hyuk’s jaw dropped at the convenience of a private plane. It is even possible to drop someone off as though riding a car.

Going to Yoon Kwang Hun’s cafe, which is like his childhood home, is better than hiding out in a hotel. Jun Hyuk called Yoon Kwang Hun to tell him he would be going to Korea and Lim So Mi arranged the departure date with Stern Corporation. It is the first time he is returning to Korea since he left.

Chapter 176

[Private plane with the Stern Man]

Jun Hyuk packed lightly and left his apartment to find a young man waiting for him with a limousine.

“Maestro Jun?”

“Yes.”

“I’m with Stern Corporation. I will accompany you until boarding.”

The young man put Jun Hyuk’s luggage in the trunk and they left for the airport.

There is a separate departure area at New York’s JFK airport for private or charter planes. ‘VIPs do not stop walking’ is an iron law there. They had arranged it so that he would not have to stop moving or wait from the time he got out of the car until he boarded the plane.

Private or charter plane passengers only have to have their passport and go through an outbound control gate that not many people can see. Once they board the cart, they glide up to the plane waiting for them. An employee takes care of all of the baggage.

People who enjoy these conveniences pay a tremendous amount of fees every time they fly.

Once Jun Hyuk passed through airport control with his passport, an airport employee was waiting to escort him to his plane. As this is his first time receiving such treatment, he is just confused.

The aircraft is a Boeing 737-700 model worth \$80 million, and is a 7-seater. Upon boarding, Isaac Stern was waiting for him with a smile.

“So we finally meet again, Maestro Jun.”

“Huh? Have we met before? You seem familiar.”

“I guess you don’t remember. At the fundraiser for the New York conservatories...”

“Oh, that’s right. In the hotel garden!”

“Ha ha. That’s right. I’m still just a fan of your piano, but you’ve changed from a student to a maestro.”

Jun Hyuk could not close his mouth. The old man who had sat next to him during dinner was the president of Stern Corporation?

“I see you were an important person. You even have such a luxurious private plane.”

“This?”

Isaac Stern tapped the plane wall.

“I barely use this once or twice a year. I don’t really have reason to go abroad. Maestros normally use it. When they tour.”

The people who use it the most are the greats who have more activity. It is evidence that they constantly receive invitations from all around the world.

Settled in a chair that may as well have been a sofa, the plane quickly took off. The only passengers were Jun Hyuk, Isaac Stern, and 2 men who seem to be employees. 2 stewardesses were on standby for the 4 passengers.

“But I’m sure there’s no reason for you to treat me like this. I’m a complete rookie with just 1 weird song.”

“That’s the song that’s known. Don’t you have piles of masterpieces that haven’t yet been released to the world?”

“They’re not masterpieces.....”

“I saw them for myself, and it’s alright to call them masterpieces.”

“Excuse me? You saw them?”

“Mr. Yoon showed them to me. He said it’s the surest way to know you.”

President Stern recalled the surprise from then and whistled.

“There are very few songs that I would reveal confidently. I’m embarrassed.”

His face became red with a feeling as though someone had read his journal.

“My thoughts are the complete opposite. There were only a few songs that you could forget about.”

Jun Hyuk felt like they were discussing his journal, and quickly changed the subject.

“What did Mr. Yoon say?”

“He said that you need to know your own thoughts that not even you know.”

“Do you know? The thoughts that not even I know?”

“How could I? How would I know unless I were psychic? Ha ha.”

Isaac Stern laughed freely.

“I’ll say it simply. We will just help you to do whatever it is you want to do, no matter what it is. Anything else is a bluff.”

Isaac Stern confessed honestly that nothing is guaranteed, took out a cigarette, and lit it.

“Instead, I’ll tell you a really great forte of our company. Our contracts don’t have contract periods.”

“Do you have a hold on people forever?”

“No, the opposite. We leave the application dates of the contract empty so people can end it whenever they decide that they don’t like our company.”

A contract that they can end at any time. For the management agency, it is an unfavorable term that they can end it at any time they are not satisfied with the management.

“I hear that as you saying you have a lot of confidence.”

“More than confidence, it’s having a heart.”

“Heart?”

“Yeah. The heart of having a one-sided love of artists forever. A one-sided love means worshipping the subject of that love and not neglecting it. That’s why I only contract people who I can worship, not stars who will bring me a lot of money.”

It is an interesting philosophy, but there must be times when the one-sided love does not continue forever. President Stern continued to speak as if he had read Jun Hyuk’s mind.

“Most are maintaining their contracts without writing in contract dates. I guess that means everyone is satisfied?”

President Stern smiled at Jun Hyuk and showed a great confidence. Jun Hyuk started to like this pleasant old man more and more.

“Then what do you do if someone signed a contract, terminated it, and wants to be contracted again? Do you still worship him??”

“There were stars who said that they wanted to sign on to our company again, but I never do it.”

President Stern stopped laughing and spoke emphatically.

“Why?”

“I married 4 times and I’ve never re-married an ex-wife. He he.”

4 times? Jun Hyuk could not shut his mouth. He thought that this old man is able to maintain a contract for a long time, but might be a playboy who cannot keep a marriage for long.

In the beginning of the 1950s when rock n roll spread like fire, white society and the older generation did not look on it kindly. At the time, there were endless incidents for rock stars. Jerry Lee Lewis was criticized by the press for marrying his 13 year old cousin and his fame died down. Chuck Berry was criticized legally and morally and imprisoned for crossing state lines with a minor.

On top of that, there were accidental deaths one after the other.

In 1959, an airplane carrying Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and Big Bopper crashed. In 1960, Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran got on a taxi to go to the airport when the tire went out and they crashed. Eddie Cochran died and Gene Vincent became crippled and died of an addiction to pharmaceuticals.

With a continuation of such anxious times, Elvis Presley volunteered for military service even though he was not being drafted. It was to transform his image into that of a youth who loves and is loyal to his country. The song he came out with after his discharge was not rock n roll but 'Are You Lonesome Tonight,' a ballad. It was a signal that he is no longer the hoodlum who does rock n roll.

This is a scenario created by Elvis Presley's eternal manager, Tom Parker.

When the Beatles landed in America and the door of their plane opened, they had short haircuts and wore polished suits. This was not an image to show the young female fans gathered at the airport, but to show their parents.

'We are not hoodlums. We're nice.' It was to relay this kind of message even though the Beatles are youths who used to play roughly in Liverpool clubs.

This strategy was that of Brian Epstein, the manager called the 5th Beatles.

World-renowned stars are born when they move according to their managers' strategies.

On the one hand, it is also the manager's job to get the stars what they want.

Piano virtuoso Glenn Gould did not hold concerts. He had mental and physical issues, but he believed that concerts are pianists' performing their emotional states and the passion of the theater is a distortion. He stopped concerts in his thirties and only revealed his music through albums.

Giving up concerts is not only giving up ticket sales. Concerts themselves are the best promotions and advertisements to push album sales.

However, Glenn Gould's manager accepted all of this easily in order to help him create the best music.

When Isaac Stern said that he would help Jun Hyuk achieve whatever he wants, it

means that he would follow whatever choice Jun Hyuk makes, whether it is to be a star or an artist.

Giving the condition that he can end the contract whenever he wants even if he does not become a star means that Isaac Stern has full confidence in his eye for choosing the people he signs on.

Jun Hyuk, who does not have particular plans yet, threw a playful question,

“Mr. Stern. Don’t think about what I want. If I were to do what you wanted, what would you have me do?”

“Hm... I’m sure the question isn’t about business, but rather my personal ambition?”

“Yes.”

“I haven’t thought about it. What would I want.....”

Isaac Stern lit his cigar again and thought for a while.

“Ah! That’s right.”

He suddenly put the cigar down and looked a bit excited.

“There’s something I thought of the moment when Mr. Yoon showed me your scores.”

“What is that?”

“I want to see you take all of the genres at the Grammy Awards.”

He grew more and more excited as he spoke.

“Rock and jazz performances, composition, arranging, R&B. And best classical album and best performance. Of course you’d have to play the piano to receive the award for best performance. You sweep all of those awards in one year. What do you think? Isn’t it thrilling?”

Jun Hyuk was in disbelief. This elderly President who has gone through all sorts of experiences is lost in such childish thoughts?

“Even if I did win in all of those categories, would the Grammy’s give it all to me? They would distribute them.”

“Oh, you’re finally getting to know the power of management. If you are qualified to receive album quality, it’s the management agency’s job to make it so you can get all of them. Ha ha.”

Isaac Stern showed glee like a child and Jun Hyuk laughed as well.

“Mr. Stern, let’s sign the contract. Of course I’ll have to discuss it with Mr. Yoon and my lawyer, Catherine Lim, but I like you.”

“Oh, is that so? Did you like the Grammy’s? Or is it the private plane?”

Isaac Stern must have already expected that Jun Hyuk would sign because he did not show joy but rather relaxation enough to joke around.

“More than that, the fact that I can call the contract off if there’s anything I don’t like. That itself is my first condition in doing whatever I want to do.”

Isaac Stern nodded in understanding and showed confidence that he does not mind what Jun Hyuk is saying.

“If I make all types of demands like asking to borrow the private plane, saying that I won’t stay in anything but a hotel deluxe suite, or asking for a personal chef... If I keep making these ridiculous demands and say that I won’t reveal a song I wrote because I don’t like it, you’ll have a lot of losses.”

“Well. I guess I’ll have to leave a special condition in the contract in case.”

“What kind of condition?”

“Releasing is up to you, but I can see the score. I’m good with that much.”

Isaac Stern revealed his longing for Jun Hyuk’s music without any pretense. Jun Hyuk was satisfied with this kind of Isaac Stern.

Chapter 177

[Back in Korea]

When Jun Hyuk arrived at the cafe, signs saying that it is temporarily closed stood out to him.

“Sir. I’m here.”

When he entered through the cafe doors, Yoon Kwang Hun was wiping his hands and walking out of the kitchen.

“You’re here? How was it flying on a private plane? Was it comfortable?”

“It was amazing. It just felt like a house.”

Yoon Kwang Hun welcomed Jun Hyuk without making a fuss, as if he is greeting a son who has come home after a day of work.

“But why are you temporarily closed? Are you repairing the cafe?”

“No. Because you’re coming. If we open, you need to stay locked up at home upstairs.”

In contrast to his calm demeanor, he had been waiting for Jun Hyuk.

“You must be jetlagged. Go upstairs and get some sleep. I cleared up your room already.”

“No. I slept a lot on the plane. Oh right. I heard you met President Isaac Stern.”

“Yeah. He looked up your background so thoroughly he came to me first. How was it? Did you have a good talk?”

“Yes. I decided to sign with him.”

“Really? I guess you liked him.”

Yoon Kwang Hun did not ask more. Circumstances where he needs to decide and act

on his own will increase. Yoon Kwang Hun is thinking that he needs to hold his opinion back more.

“He said that terminating the contract is possible at any time. That’s why I said we should do it. I haven’t thought that I need a management agency yet.”

“Sure. You’ll know if you try it out. If you like it and it’s comfortable, keep doing it. If it’s uncomfortable, terminate it. Oh right, are you hungry? What do you want to eat?”

“Oh. Can you make me a plate of tonkatsu?”

“Tonkatsu?”

“Yes. I was craving your tonkatsu.”

Yoon Kwang Hun must have already had it all prepared, because he quickly made a plate for Jun Hyuk.

“Are there articles of me?”

Jun Hyuk spoke as he ate it in big bites and quickly emptied the plate.

“Of course. It came up in a few places that you were fired from the Boston Philharmonic. It’s not as noisy as before though. You’re not a star. Ha ha.”

“What? Fired? Not resigned?”

“Well that’s that. Articles need to be negative to sell. They need to make money too.”

Jun Hyuk and Yoon Kwang Hun spent the first day drinking coffee and talking about the Boston Philharmonic.

It is true when people say that children who live far away from home come back to their parents’ homes to spend their time eating and sleeping. He kept feeling hunger and he always felt sleepy. Jun Hyuk forgot about music for the first time in a while and rested for 2 days while eating and sleeping.



When Jun Hyuk lazily opened his eyes, the cafe downstairs was a bit noisy. He decided to stay upstairs because he thought that reporters might have come for him, but he heard laughter and realized that they are not reporters.

Downstairs, Professor Jeon Hye Jin, Fine Philharmonic's Hwang Suk Min, and Han Ye Ji were exchanging stories about how they know Jun Hyuk.

"Oh? Jun Hyuk. You're awake?"

"Yes. Hello, Professor."

Hwang Suk Min bolted up from his seat and held Jun Hyuk's hand.

"Wow. Jang Jun Hyuk! No. Maestro Jang! Let me hold this hand that's held the Boston Philharmonic's baton."

"Why are you being like this?"

Jun Hyuk tried to take his hand back, but Hwang Suk Min strengthened his grip. His eyes were frozen with jealousy and admiration.

"Hey! Why'd you quit? If Inferno is hard, you should have conducted Beethoven. It's really a pity."

"Whew. Stop it Teacher Hwang. Isn't he a child who has endless opportunities going forward?"

Jun Hyuk bowed to Professor Jeon Hye Jin who had her back turned to him, but he could not remember Han Ye Ji's name.

"Professor, you're here as well."

"Yeah. Mr. Yoon called me when you got here. I was about to run here right away, but held myself back. I thought I should let you have some father son time."

Even though Professor Jeon Hye Jin said 'father and son,' Yoon Kwang Hun and Jun Hyuk did not feel awkward about it.

“Hello, Jun Hyuk.”

“Ah, hello. We met in Salzburg.....”

“Yes. You forgot my name, didn’t you? It’s Han Ye Ji.”

Professor Jeon saw Han Ye Ji smiling and Jun Hyuk scratching his head, took him by the hand and made him sit.

“There there. Now let’s here this movie-like story. From Salzburg to Boston.”

Jun Hyuk told them everything that happened to him over the last 8 months, without leaving anything out. The shock he felt when he heard the Berlin Philharmonic playing the song that even he had forgotten about. Meeting world renowned maestros. And recording in Boston.

When they imagined everything Jun Hyuk was telling them, it really felt like a movie.

“So, how long are you going to stay here?”

“I don’t have anything planned. I just came. I don’t even really have anything to say.”

“What about school? Oh, nevermind. It’d be weird for a guy who conducted for the Boston Philharmonic to go back to school as a student.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin asked half in worry and half in expectation, but her heart was not at ease. Hwang Suk Min saw her expression and also frowned.

“Goodness. Normally, Korea needs to be in a buzz... It’d be definite for broadcasting stations and newspapers to be praising a 20 year old who was hired to conduct one of the top 5 American symphonies.”

“Well that’s because I came into the country without anyone knowing.”

Hwang Suk Min tsked and shook his head.

“Is that really what it is? I’m pretty sure that even if they know, they’ll write a few lines and that’d be it. Ye Ji. How many articles were there that you came in 6th at the Tchaikovsky Competition? Was it about 100?”

“Teacher, what do you mean 100?”

When the direction was suddenly changed to her, Han Ye Ji was taken aback.

“Teacher Hwang. Why are you being like that to Ye Ji? Stop.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin knew why Hwang Suk Min is so excited, but she did not want to discuss it anymore.

Hwang Suk Min’s indignation is not because of the press or broadcasting stations. When Professor Jeon Hye Jin heard of Jun Hyuk’s return to Korea, she thought that she must put him on stage in Korea since they do not know when he might come back.

She quietly sounded her thoughts to various people, saying that he should leave something behind in Korea with this opportunity. She made requests to leading symphonies in the country because she thought it would be best for him to conduct, but they were apathetic. They regretfully refused, saying that it would be difficult to change their schedules.

Behind these refusals, it must also be a big part that Jun Hyuk does not have a link to the Korean classical world. It would have been possible to overcome these issues if the press had pushed for Jun Hyuk as a national hero, but even this was impossible because Jun Hyuk had built a wall against the press.

And Amelia was right. To the greats in Korea, Jun Hyuk has nothing in common with them and he is just a rookie who only released 1 song of a new contemporary music format.

Yoon Kwang Hun spoke up in order to get rid of the awkward energy,

“There there. We’re grateful that you care so much, but Jun Hyuk came to rest. Right now is perfect. And... Ye Ji.”

“Yes?”

Due to the heavy atmosphere, Han Ye Ji was startled when Yoon Kwang Hun suddenly called out her name.

“What is it? Why are you surprised? Ha ha. It’s nothing. It’s just that I’d like to hear you play the piano. Would it be okay? Korea’s new star pianist is visiting my cafe and I can’t

just let you go back. I do often hear that I'm a fanatic of classical music."

"Ah, that's....."

It was already such a heavy atmosphere, so she was taken aback by Yoon Kwang Hun's sudden request.

"Ho ho. Isn't the audience too scary? Your teacher, 2 maestros, and Mr. Yoon who raised a genius? You'll have to do well. Even if you make a slight miss, everyone will figure it out."

The playful Professor Jeon Hye Jin added this in.

"Just play comfortably for us. I haven't heard it yet, but really want to."

Once even Jun Hyuk was chiming in, she could not refuse and sat in front of the piano.

She closed her eyes for a second to choose a song, and then put her hands on the piano. The song she chose is Rondo Alla Turca.

Chapter 178

[JH has something up his sleeve...]

Rondo is a form of music with a recurring leading theme. It is also simply known as Turkish March. She did not play it in Mozart's original version, but flavored it with her own arrangement.

Han Ye Ji used all 88 keys and showed most of the techniques she knows within 2 minutes and 30 seconds. They could tell that she had arranged it in order to show as much of her ability as she could. She showed them the explosive openness that Professor Jeon Hye Jin first showed Jun Hyuk and her own subtlety.

She was using all of her power, so much so that they could see the movement of her muscles from the sleeves she had pulled up. Her face was flushed because she had used all of her strength. Her face reddened even more at the sound of the 4 people clapping.

"Jun Hyuk. What do you think? She's pretty good, right?"

When Professor Jeon Hye Jin was looking at Jun Hyuk, the pride of her student was evident.

"She's not just pretty good. How did she come in 6th at the competition? She could win and then some."

Jun Hyuk's eyes showed that his compliments to Professor Jeon are sincere.

"This kid! Your girlfriend made such a scene right before Ye Ji that she was overshadowed."

To Ye Ji, it was the greatest praise that Jun Hyuk was in such admiration that he had even forgotten that Amelia won.

"No, Professor. I'm grateful for even coming in 6th."

Han Ye Ji was modest but Yoon Kwang Hun did not miss the chance to compliment her.

“No, there’s a shortcoming in the assessment. That’s really impressive.”

Yoon Kwang Hun even thought that Han Ye Ji’s piano would soon surpass that of her mentor’s.

“Tchaikovsky was the 2nd competition? It’s a lack of experience. You can reach for the win at the next competition.”

Yoon Kwang Hun kept praising her. Hwang Suk Min had a good idea while listening to her play, and clapped his hands together.

“I have a good idea. What do you think about this?”

Everyone focused on Hwang Suk Min.

“What about holding a performance the day before Jun Hyuk leaves?”

“Excuse me? A performance?”

Everyone’s eyes widened at the mention of a performance.

“Yeah. Jun Hyuk can conduct for our Fine Philharmonic.”

“Teacher Hwang, you’re too ambitious. You think Jun Hyuk will be satisfied with Fine Philharmonic after conducting for Boston?”

“Don’t be too mean. It is a bit of a poor instrument, but I’m telling you we can perform Beethoven really well.”

Since Fine Philharmonic normally performs music that the average person enjoys, they receive pretty high reviews for Beethoven, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky.

“I don’t think it would be a bad performance if Ye Ji plays the piano for us.”

As soon as the piano and Beethoven were linked, Professor Jeon could figure out what performance Hwang Suk Min had in mind.

“Teacher Hwang. Are you saying we should perform Beethoven’s ‘Emperor’?”

“Yes. Don’t you think it’d be perfect? Since the orchestra can’t match up to Jun Hyuk,

Ye Ji can cover on the piano.”

“But why the day before he leaves?”

“If there are articles criticizing it, it won’t matter. So Jun Hyuk won’t be bothered.”

If Jun Hyuk had heard this suggestion before, he would have refused it. But after hearing Han Ye Ji’s piano, it is a very slightly attractive offer. He wants to see more of Han Ye Ji’s piano than conduct the Fine Philharmonic.

“What do you think? Jun Hyuk, the calligraphy doesn’t cover the brush. And it’ll become a memory.”

“Teacher Hwang, you’ll have some damage. Is that okay?”

Professor Jeon’s worry was comparing Jun Hyuk and Hwang Suk Min. If Jun Hyuk conducts, the orchestra members would be the first to compare the two.

“Well what of it? It’s something everyone knows. And it’s a process without any type of recording. Only the people who come to the performance will see it.”

“Ho ho. Anyway, we have to recognize that you’re wry.”

If there are no recordings, Jun Hyuk’s music disappears in the concert hall. Anyone who does not want to miss it needs to watch. Even those who try their hardest to ignore Jun Hyuk will come looking for the performance out of sheer curiosity.

Hwang Suk Min spoke again to prevent any misunderstandings there might be.

“Won’t it also look good if we donate all of the proceeds to a charity under Jun Hyuk and Ye Ji’s names?”

The person who embraced Hwang Suk Min’s idea was Yoon Kwang Hun. He has not yet seen Jun Hyuk conduct an orchestra. He wanted Jun Hyuk to accept Hwang Suk Min’s proposal just so he could watch Jun Hyuk conduct in person.

However, Jun Hyuk could not respond to this sudden proposal.

“There’s no pressure, so just think about it. Call me if it gets boring to just eat, sleep, and hang out. Ha ha.”

A meeting that had gathered just to see faces ended with a performance proposal. When the 3 people left, Yoon Kwang Hun tried to find out how Jun Hyuk is feeling.

“Jun Hyuk. What do you think about Teacher Hwang’s proposal?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t even decided when I’ll be leaving... It’s ambiguous.”

“Yeah. Didn’t Teacher Hwang say it before? Call him if you get bored. For now, rest more.”

However, not even a day passed before he could tell how Jun Hyuk is feeling. He was humming the melody to piano concerto Emperor.

There were occasionally fun times when people rooting for Jun Hyuk would come by for a cup of tea or a drink, but Jun Hyuk was still just hanging out.

In that time, Lawyer Lim So Mi sent over the contract with Stern Corporation.

“Commission is 15%. The other conditions are unconventional. First, President Stern has an apartment in New York that he will allow Jun Hyuk to use, and everything else is the same as the conditions that the maestro of the New York Philharmonic has. As you know, he can terminate the contract at any time, so it’s a bit much to nitpick over more.”

“I understand. I’ll talk it over with Jun Hyuk and call you right away.”

The standing conductor of the New York Philharmonic receives the best treatment from Stern Corporation. As Lawyer Lim So Mi said, asking for anything more is too greedy.

Jun Hyuk signed the contract with Stern Corporation without disagreement, and everything started changing little by little.

He had been spending half of his days rolling around in bed, but was now sitting in front of his desk from early in the morning until dawn. The scores accumulated as much as he spent the time, and he occasionally sat at the piano to knock on the keys.

“Are you writing a new song? What is it this time?”

“I’ll tell you when it’s all done. This time, it really feels good.”

“What? It must be no joke if it’s enough for you to say that you have a good feeling.”

Yoon Kwang Hun’s heart beat with anticipation because this is the first time he is seeing Jun Hyuk so full of confidence.

“Ah. It lacks too much to be called a masterpiece, but it’s really fun to make. It’s to the point where I don’t know why I didn’t think of it before. He he.”

Yoon Kwang Hun could not hold back his curiosity and tried to take a peek at the score, but Jun Hyuk freaked out and hid it.

“Ugh. Stop it. I said I’d show it to you when it’s done.”

“Hey! Why are you hiding it when I’ll see it anyway?”

“I told you this is fun. Have patience for that fun.”

Yoon Kwang Hun needed to say what he had been holding back while watching Jun Hyuk write songs.

“But Jun Hyuk.”

“Yes.”

“When are you thinking of doing the performance that Teacher Hwang proposed?”

“Oh that? I wasn’t going to do it.”

Jun Hyuk was surprised when he saw Yoon Kwang Hun’s disappointment.

“Were you looking forward to a performance?”

“Oh, it’s not that... I was just wondering when the people who helped you would get to see you conduct if not for this opportunity. And I thought you were thinking of doing it because I heard you humming the melody for Emperor.”

“He he. I actually got a hint from Emperor and Han Ye Ji’s piano.”

“Hint? The song you’re working on now?”

Yoon Kwang Hun could guess that Jun Hyuk is working on a piano concerto or piano sonata.

“Yes. I told you it’ll be fun.”

But he still could not tell what would be so fun.

“Then what about the concert?”

Yoon Kwang Hun did not fold his expectations yet. It is also because there is someone he wants to watch Jun Hyuk’s conducting with.

“I’ll finish up the song I’m working on now, and then think about it.”

Even after saying that he would finish it and think about it, another month passed by.

Chapter 179

Yoon Kwang Hun read the thick bundle of scores that Jun Hyuk gave him several times. It was to figure out what fun Jun Hyuk had been talking about.

But before he could find the fun in it, his jaw dropped at its configuration. Just the instrumentation is incredible. There are 29 instruments. It is such a large song that in a real performance, it would require over 100 people to play.

The song is long enough that even when played at an incredibly fast speed, it would take over 1 hour an hour to play. Yoon Kwang Hun was having such fun with the scale and changes of the song that he did not have time to think about the secret Jun Hyuk mentioned.

Looking at the number of movements in the symphony, it is not very different from a 4 movement classical. But the conventionally slow 2nd movement is nowhere to be found and instead retains change and taut suspense until the 3rd movement.

Once the radical presentation ends, there is an epitasis of over 180 bars. There wasn't the typical method of using repeat marks to replicate a constant thematic progression and instead went straight into the repetition and closing.

He thought that it was a symphony when he first opened the score, but it transformed into a double concerto. The piano and violin had appeared out of nowhere.

As soon as the 2nd movement started, piano and violin solos jumped out so suddenly the person looking could almost pass out from surprise.

The 3rd movement did not transform different subjects in a variation format, but kept throwing around one subject. It kept pushing forward through a sweet harmony, a dignified performance, a destructive rampancy, and an explosive timpani.

The most bizarre aspect was the 4th movement. The emptiness that could be felt in the first 3 movements appeared in the 4th.

Until the 3rd movement, it was like watching a blockbuster movie of a magnificent scale, grand effects, and continuous action. However, the 4th movement changed into

a dry art film.

He could not guess why Jun Hyuk had created such a configuration. He looked the score over dozens of times to see if the fun that Jun Hyuk had talked about was hidden there, but was not able to find it.

“Hey! Give me a hint. What’s so fun about this song that it’s such a secret?”

“The fun is in finding it. Ha ha.”

Jun Hyuk laughed proudly. It could be that the fun Jun Hyuk is thinking of is in watching people look for the hidden fun in the score.

“And Sir, that score isn’t complete. There’s something I need to add to it. I left it out because if it’s there, anyone can figure it out. Should I give it to you?”

“No. I’m going to figure it out no matter what.”

Yoon Kwang Hun glared at a laughing Jun Hyuk and buried himself in the score again.

Yoon Kwang Hun got lost in the score as though he had discovered a new toy. He finally found the hidden secret 2 days later.

Once he figured out the secret, he was blank and did not move for a while.

Jun Hyuk put himself to a rash challenge for 2 months, and it seemed that challenge had been a success. He cannot be sure that it is a success because he has not yet seen the score that Jun Hyuk hid.

Jun Hyuk had not gotten enough sleep while doing work, so he did not leave his bed for half of the day.

Jun Hyuk finally came down to the cafe when the sun was setting.

“Oh, you figured the secret out. Your expression... What do you think? Isn’t it great?”

Jun Hyuk smiled brightly when he found Yoon Kwang Hun not looking at the score and blankly enjoying a cup of coffee.

“Hey! Didn’t you say that it falls short of a masterpiece?”

Yoon Kwang Hun yelled as though Jun Hyuk had used trickery in a fun game.

“I’d be embarrassed to call it a masterpiece.”

“What’s your standard of a masterpiece? Though, I guess I’ll have to see the rest of what you haven’t shown me yet. Hurry up and hand it over.”

Jun Hyuk looked at Yoon Kwang Hun’s hand and kept laughing.

“You have to tell me the answer to the riddle first.”

Jun Hyuk urged Yoon Kwang Hun’s answer with sparkling eyes.

“Give me the vocal part.”

“As expected. You solved it in 2 days. Wait a second.”

Yoon Kwang Hun got goosebumps at the sight of Jun Hyuk running to get the score. He was more surprised by Jun Hyuk’s rash challenge than he was pleased by solving it.

He spent another day looking at the rest of the score that Jun Hyuk brought him.

Jun Hyuk waited the entire day for Yoon Kwang Hun to finish looking at the score.

“What do you think? Sir, honestly isn’t it great?”

“You said yourself that it isn’t a masterpiece. But what are you saying is so great?”

“Masterpieces aren’t the only ones that are great. I’m pretty sure this kind of fun configuration is the first.”

More than fun was the fact that he had done a configuration that no one had ever done before. Even if someone had thought of it first, doing the actual work is a different issue. How many people are capable of creating something like this? Yoon Kwang Hun could only sigh while looking at Jun Hyuk, who said that it was just for fun.

“Whew – Anyway, what are you thinking of doing with this? Did you just make it? You want me to store this one too?”

“No. I’m actually pleased with this one. So I’m thinking about it.”

It had been a while since Yoon Kwang Hun had seen Jun Hyuk with such confidence, and made him realize something.

“Jun Hyuk.”

“Yes.”

“You signed on with a management agency so you don’t have to think about stuff like that. Show them the score and discuss it with them.”

“Ah, that’s not what I’m thinking about. It’s what Amelia said about gaining work experience through a competition. I wrote this song with the Queen Elisabeth Competition in mind.”

“Do you need to do that? Stern would be able to spread this out to maestros all over the world.”

He is grateful that Amelia worries about Jun Hyuk’s future, but it could be a faster path than gaining experience through competitions. Yoon Kwang Hun thought that if it is Isaac Stern, he would be able to lay out a highway for the future in front of Jun Hyuk.

“Then I won’t be able to conduct it. If I win in the composition part of the Queen Elisabeth Competition, I would be able to conduct it myself.”

“What? Is that why you made this a double concerto? Because the piano and violin winners perform in the finals?”

“Yes. Then I’d get to conduct this song multiple times. I thought of how I would perform it slightly differently with the piano and violin.”

He stated the reason of gaining experience, but it showed that his desire to conduct the song was really greater. It could be inevitable that he has the ambition to do it when it is a song of such a grand scale.

“Do you really need to do that? President Stern would make it so that you would be able to conduct the premiere.”

“Oh, do you think that much would be possible?”

“You have to end the contract if he can’t even do that. Not being able to do it is one of

two reasons. Either he doesn't have the eye to see this song's worth, or his company doesn't have the ability to get the New York Philharmonic for this song."

Jun Hyuk found courage in Yoon Kwang Hun's words and already started drawing a picture of himself conducting for the New York Philharmonic.

"Scan the score and try sending it to him. Let's see what kind of response comes back."

The score was so large that it took a whole day to scan it. If Yoon Kwang Hun is right, Isaac Stern would call the second he opened to the 1st movement. However, a week passed and he did not receive a call.

President Stern had been able to recognize Jun Hyuk's piano playing before Laura's beautiful singing but did not show a reaction, making Jun Hyuk nervous.

Stern is not showing a reaction when he is the type of person who identifies the value of music exactly. There are over 40 maestros signed with Stern Corporation. It could be that he is showing the song to these maestros in order to make a precise judgment of its worth.

The fact that he is nevertheless silent could mean that he decided the song does not live up to expectations as much as Jun Hyuk thought it would.

Jun Hyuk is restless like a child, but Yoon Kwang Hun is in a relaxed state.

"It's okay. He's not saying anything because it's great. If it was mediocre, he would have called right away. He would have just said things like 'I got the score. It's as good as I thought it'd be.'"

"Why isn't he showing a reaction if it's good?"

"Are you saying you still don't know? I'll tell you another thing about the way adults work, so listen well, little one."

Yoon Kwang Hun pushed Jun Hyuk into a seat by his shoulders.

"President Stern isn't your fan anymore. That's a private matter. Now you have a business contractual relationship. There's no reason for him to be praising you on your music. Whether he likes it or not, it's his job to make it into 'work.'"

Yoon Kwang Hun knows from experience that there is no point in business partners saying nice things to each other.

“It’s Isaac Stern’s job to look at your score, think about what he’s going to do, create a plan, and put that plan into motion. He’ll be doing that work now. He can just look for you when he absolutely needs to.”

Jun Hyuk’s face finally relaxed considerably.

“Did you just send the score? You didn’t tell him your thoughts?”

“No. I also wrote asking what he thought about submitting it for the competition.”

“Then I’m sure he included that in his plan as well. He’ll work in your favor. Keep it in mind. Don’t trust people who only say things you like to hear. You need to put your trust in people who show you results instead of words.”

Chapter 180

Not a single thing Yoon Kwang Hun said was wrong.

President Stern's call after 10 days had passed told him that they had created a plan and were currently working on it.

"Jun, the score you sent me. Can you send the original or make up another copy?"

"Of the score?"

"Yeah. Do you need to modify it anymore?"

"No. It's complete."

"Then send it right away. We'll submit it to the Queen Elisabeth Competition."

When Isaac Stern told him the conclusion, Jun Hyuk was taken aback.

"Excuse me? Isaac... I was just asking what you thought of submitting it, not that we need to."

"But I think it's a good idea to submit it."

"You do?"

"Yeah. There's a time for everything. Competitions are a privilege for the young. Winning with concrete numbers against a lot of competitors isn't something you can do when you're older. Only because of useless pride. Ha ha."

Jun Hyuk gained courage from Isaac Stern's vigorous laughter and told him the real goal.

"Uh, Isaac. More than the competition or winning, I'd like to conduct with the piano and violin soloists."

"Really? Then you really must win. Fine. I'll make you into a winner."

He will make him into a winner? It is a surprising thought beyond confidence.

“What? You’ll make me? Is that what a competition is? Does that mean it’s a show where a winner isn’t chosen, but where it’s possible to make a winner?”

Stern laughed again at Jun Hyuk’s surprised tone.

“Ha ha. Jun, don’t misunderstand me. This piece is certainly the winner. But there will be a lot of controversy. I’m going to block any circumstances where that controversy might prevent you from winning. I mean that I’m going to make it a fair competition that judges based on the works alone.”

“There will be controversy?”

“What? You didn’t think about that while you were making the song?”

He does not even know what his own song might mean. Stern was more surprised by this.

“No. I just thought it’d be fun.”

“Ha ha. Well this really is fun. I did predict that there would be a lot of cases like this if I were with you. That case came too quickly.”

“Isaac. Why will this song become a controversy?”

“Beethoven is the only one in history called an evil. Furthermore, his Symphony No. 9 has been put in the UNESCO World Register. It’s play on the most important day in each country, and is the most worshipped piece. But isn’t your song a challenge thrown at Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9? It’s a miscalculation to think that it won’t become a controversy.”

Isaac Stern’s long explanation made Jun Hyuk realize that this is how people could view his song.

“I say let’s see what happens. Let’s see how the judges of Queen Elisabeth and the world will accept this fearless challenge. It’s thrilling just thinking about it.”

President Stern was still laughing when he hung up the phone with a stunned Jun Hyuk who could not speak.

When he first opened the score that came via e-mail, his eyes and ears were disbelieving. When he finished the 1st movement, it felt like he had just gotten off of a rollercoaster. He was dizzy.

There had not been a moment for relaxation. The music pushed forward so much that 18 minutes felt like a few seconds.

When the 2nd movement unfolded and the violin and piano suddenly jumped out, it was shocking. No one could imagine that a symphony would transform into a concerto. Destruction of the form was not all.

The piano and violin were like a captain that needs to get through the rough ocean of the orchestra by overcoming the rapidly changing melody and sprinting for 12 minutes.

As soon as the thick bass and vocal tenor started, it brought up Beethoven's choral symphony. The orchestra, vocal, piano, and violin blended in harmony and when he closed the score as it ended the last movement in exaltation, he could understand the piece's intent.

Isaac Stern went back to the 1st movement to start checking everything one by one.

18 minutes, 12 minutes, 19 minutes, 25 minutes. 4 movements combined. It is like the choral symphony of Beethoven that the Berlin Philharmonic's Furtwangler conducted. He had run for this long time without breathing, and the result is a challenge!

Isaac Stern could not decide how to assess this piece. It is too radical of a challenge thrown at Beethoven.

There is too much transition in this song that goes over an hour, making it hard to breathe. The 2nd movement that releases the anxiety that appears in normal sonata forms, does not exist.

Stern has led a management agency for musicians well until now because of his ability to listen to a piece just once and lay down an assessment. Isaac Stern needed to know the true worth behind this song he was reserving judgment from.

He had to call a meeting with the top staff of Stern Corporation. They are people with discernment and insight to find the essence of excellent music.

8 staff members sat on the sofa in President Stern's office and looked over the score for over 2 hours before closing it. Their expressions were not very different from that of President Stern when he first saw this piece. Then a long silence began.

"I'm sure this was enough time to enjoy the aftertaste? Everyone, snap out of it."

Isaac Stern woke up each person while they were lost in their thoughts.

"This Jun. He really is impressive."

"Right? I can't imagine how he wrote such a song."

"More than that, my jaw dropped when I first saw the broad mindedness of this song. How could he think of fighting in the same ring as Beethoven? Isn't this him asking us to compare his choral symphony with this piece?"

The staff's enjoyment of the song was not different from Isaac Stern's. They had all loved the song for 200 years, but no musician had ever tried to challenge it.

"But don't you think he's plenty qualified to go in the ring?"

"Exactly. He's reckless."

"What do you think? How do you think the world will accept this incredible challenge that Jun Hyuk is throwing out there?"

"No one will be able to believe it. Who would believe that it's Beethoven, and none other than the choral symphony?"

"Isn't the challenge sitting right in front of you? What can't you believe?"

"Isaac. You know that's not what I mean..."

"Forget it. Everyone, say your conclusions first. Who do you think will get the champion belt? Is it Beethoven who has held the throne for 200 years? Or 20 year old Jun?"

Jun Hyuk's challenge is reckless, but Stern's straightforward question is also reckless. Even if Jun Hyuk's song is better, how could they admit Beethoven's defeat?

However, it is a question from a boss who pays them a hefty salary. And it is a difficult boss who hates ambiguous answers.

The 8 staff members praised the piece first. But the conclusion is that Jun Hyuk loses. 5 of the staff were of the same thought as Isaac Stern. They voted in Beethoven's favor because it is so fast and there are so many changes that there is not a single moment to take a breath.

The interesting aspect is the evaluation of the remaining 3 people. The con of Jun Hyuk's piece that had made the other 5 people raise their hands for Beethoven. They rather feel a catharsis from the speed and changes. It is not a disadvantage, but the device that will allow it to win Beethoven.

"Is that so? I also felt uncomfortable with how rapid the changes are... but it is captivating to some people. Well that's interesting too."

Silence fell again. They need to assess the grounds for this precisely. People who enjoy art think about it and analyze it constantly after enjoying it. The person who transcends from this thought and analysis is a critic. Stern Corporation needs to have precise praise or criticism from these critics, and they need to have the evidence to refute this criticism.

It is a management agency's duty to prevent its artists' unnecessary flaws.

The person to break the silence in President Stern's office was a staff member sitting in the back. He is young, but he already looks to be in his mid thirties.

"Isaac. That's because of age."

Everyone's attentions turned toward the young staff member who brought up age out of nowhere.

Chapter 181

“What? Age? Do you listen to classical music with age?”

“No. Should I say there are cultural differences by generation? Anyway, it is the difference between whether or not it is familiar.”

“Is there anyone here who isn’t familiar with classical music? It’s your jobs.”

“What I’m trying to talk about isn’t classical. I’m talking about the characteristic of this song. Isaac, think about movies.”

“Movies?”

The young staff member used movies as a way to express what he is thinking.

“Yes. Movies are the icons that represent their generations.”

“Take out the introduction and get to the point.”

Isaac Stern lit a cigar and cut him off.

“Let’s think about the movie Batman. Compare Director Tim Burton’s 1989 Batman and Christopher Nolan’s 2008 Dark Knight.

Isaac Stern could not compare them because he had seen Tim Burton’s Batman, but not the Dark Knight. He did not say anything because he thought the staff member would go on about age again.

“I’m not talking about a larger scale or incredible special effects. Think about the number of shorts or cuts. Today’s movie changes screen every 4 minutes on average. They edit the action parts by second units.”

The people in the office could understand what he is trying to say.

“The people of this generation get bored if there aren’t changes that are this fast. If Beethoven was a modern man, his song would have been more flashy than Jun’s.

People who are used to the whirlwind of angles used in Spiderman don't see it as excessive. They are able to enjoy it."

The world has changed over the past 200 years. There is more rapid change in 10 years in the 21st century than there is in 100 years of the 18th century. The Porsche that James Dean died in in 1955 boasted speeds of 180km/h, but Porsches now can go up to 300km/h.

Speed of change is not something that is learned, but something that becomes acclimatized throughout life.

"Your Beethoven wrote a revolutionary song and it was of a diabolical difficulty. It would have been no different from Jun Hyuk's song at the time."

The premiere with the Vienna Philharmonic in 1824 made quite a lot of money but it was not as much as Beethoven thought it would. The 2nd performance saw a deficit and it was criticized.

The format of Jun Hyuk's song is faithful to the classics, but the style is a classical matched to the contemporary. It is just that it is a classical suitable to the modern person. It is too extreme to grab people who are used to the classical of the past.

"I'm pretty sure even the youth who don't go near classical music will say that they like this song. There's not a boring moment."

"Damn. Am I now too old to find the essence of music?"

Isaac Stern grumbled, but his face was bright without any doubts.

"But Jun wants to submit this to the Queen Elisabeth Competition."

"What? What absurdity is this? Why a competition so randomly?"

The word competition is as shocking as this song is. He wants to fight Beethoven in an arena of young rookies? The right place for it is the New York Philharmonic's Lincoln Center Avery Fisher Hall.

"Yeah, but will anything become bigger news than this?"

If the New York Philharmonic performs it in Lincoln Center, it fits the song's character

and scale. But they cannot help but agree with the news that Isaac Stern is talking about. How many people in New York know about the philharmonic's performances?

With a worldwide competition however, Europe and the countries of the finalists receive reports on its progression. A competition is much more advantageous in becoming news.

"That's true, but we need to think about the problems after."

"What problem?"

The staff member looked at President Stern and hesitated, looking for a way to explain.

"Are you thinking that the results might not be good?"

"Isn't it a problem that can be predicted?"

He has no question about Jun Hyuk's work, but he worries about the judges. Not their ethics, but their actual ages. Even the staff of Stern Corporation is out of breath with a music that they are not familiar with, but judges of the old competition could be worse.

Isaac Stern smiled while listening to the staff's concerns. He felt good that none of them had read his thoughts.

"What I think is – and I'm 100% sure – he won't be able to win. The reason is that like you all said, the judges are too old to enjoy the music. Like me."

When one of the staff members was about to speak up, Isaac Stern put up his hand to stop him.

"Isn't the case where he doesn't win where we can shine our light best?"

The staff members' eyes changed. They realized President Stern's intention.

"I see. If we're thinking only of becoming a hot topic, not winning would be better."

"A misfortunate 2nd place tends to receive more spotlight."

The staff started calculating the advantages of not winning.

“Right? On top of that, we can mobilize powerful reinforcements.”

If President Stern shows Jun Hyuk’s score to maestros all around the world and gets their thoughts on it, the spotlight will be even stronger.

Isaac Stern is able to have such confidence because he is so sure of Jun Hyuk’s song.

However, Isaac Stern needed to change his thoughts. He realized what Jun Hyuk wants while talking to him over the phone. He wants to conduct in Brussels, Belgium. And Isaac Stern had agreed to do whatever Jun Hyuk wants to do.

To keep that promise, he prepared to spread the image of Jun Hyuk conducting and his work as widely as possible.



“Sir.”

“Yeah.”

“I’ll be going now. I rested enough.”

“Sure. This was a good enough vacation, right?”

“Yes.”

Jun Hyuk talked about going back to America over dinner. Yoon Kwang Hun’s face showed disappointment for a very short moment, but it quickly calmed down. Jun Hyuk’s visit had been like a surprise present. It would be harder to see him from now on.

There was something that he did regret, so he spoke up,

“That’s that. You don’t have any thoughts on performing with Fine Philharmonic?”

“No. I do want to hear Han Ye Ji’s piano again, but I don’t know about doing an official concert. I’d rather see her at her own recital.”

“Alright. There’s nothing to do if you don’t feel like it. Now, I’ll have to go see you when you perform. When do you think your first performance will be? Belgium?”

“I’m not sure. Do you think I’ll be able to win?”

“I thought President Stern said he would make you the winner? I’m going to go ahead and reserve my flight and hotel to fit the finals period. Oh right. Send me 5 admission tickets to the competition.”

“What? 5 of them? Why?”

“How can I go alone? I need to take everyone. It’ll be boring if I go alone. There’s nothing to do in Europe once the sun sets.”

“He he. Alright. I’ll prepare them right away if I win.”

Jun Hyuk finished up his last meal at Yoon Kwang Hun’s cafe.

“How about the apartment in New York? Are you going to move to the apartment that President Stern prepared for you?”

“Yes. I was told that they already moved all of my stuff and took care of the apartment I was renting. It really is comfortable that I don’t have to mind anything else.”

Since signing on with a management agency, moving was the first realistic convenience that he experienced. As Yoon Kwang Hun brought up the New York apartment, he thought of someone.

“But hasn’t it been a long time since you’ve seen Amelia? Are you two okay?”

“She’s going to come in the summer. She’s performing and recording with the BBC orchestra right now. Why? You think we might break up?”

“You don’t know the saying, out of sight out of mind? It’s an immutable truth.”

“We FaceTime every day. It’s okay.”

“I don’t mean seeing physically when I mean out of sight. It’s because you lose the opportunity to make an effort itself.”

Jun Hyuk did not know what Yoon Kwang Hun meant by effort.

“Affection is bound to die down as time passes. If you don’t make the effort to fire the

affection up again, it'll eventually die. I mean that if you stay apart this long, it's impossible even if you make the effort."

Jun Hyuk stared at Yoon Kwang Hun and spoke cautiously,

"Is that so? I don't think that's something that someone who has lived alone forever should be saying. Ha ha."

Chapter 182

Jun Hyuk followed an employee who came to meet him at New York's JFK airport to President Stern's apartment.

He was astounded when he opened the door and entered. It is grand but also incredibly wide. It is a 2-floor duplex apartment with a staircase to one side of the living room.

"Uh... Hang on..."

Jun Hyuk quickly looked for the employee who had brought him to this apartment, but he had already closed the door and left.

"Ugh."

There is no problem staying in this big house alone, but he could not imagine how to clean it when the living room alone is the size of a basketball court. There are 4 doors that he can see on just the 1st floor. How many rooms would there be on the 2nd floor?

Jun Hyuk took his phone out. It would be better to tell Isaac Stern that he should move.

"What do you think? Do you like it?"

He heard the door open with a familiar voice. Jun Hyuk put his phone back. Isaac Stern walked over to Jun Hyuk and put his arm on his shoulder.

"Tell me if you don't like it. I can look into another place."

"Isaac. I do like it... but it's too big. Cleaning it is going to be no joke. I think it'd be better to move to a smaller place....."

Isaac Stern looked at Jun Hyuk's serious expression and burst out in laughter.

"Well well. Ha ha. Would I really leave you to clean the place? Don't worry about it and stay here comfortably. A maid is going to come every day to take care of your meals and clean."

Jun Hyuk was more surprised when he heard about the maid than he had been when he saw the large house.

“A maid? I’ll just do it myself. It’s uncomfortable.”

“What? Uncomfortable? Weren’t you going to demand a personal chef? Why now?”

President Stern brought up what they had discussed in the private plane.

“That was a joke.”

“Alright. Then I’ll have someone come just once a week to do the laundry and clean. Is that fine? And come this way. You haven’t seen it yet, right?”

Isaac Stern pushed Jun Hyuk and opened one of two doors standing next to each other.

“I made this into your studio. There was a piano here for a maestro in our company who used to live here, but we moved the 2 pianos and instruments from your house here. And I prepared some other things I thought you might need. There wasn’t enough space, so we broke into the next room.”

In that room were Jun Hyuk’s guitar, amp, 2 grand pianos, and drum set.

“Isaac. Isn’t that recording equipment?”

He could see wires everywhere with a console box covered in white fabric.

“I heard that you’re good at sound engineering too. It’s not studio standard, but I left it so you could use it when you need to.”

“The sound-proofing is certain... It’s great.”

“I see you like this room more than the apartment.”

When Jun Hyuk saw the recording equipment, he suddenly remembered something.

“Oh right. What happened with the Inferno album? It hasn’t been released yet?”

“It’s going out in stores around mid-June.”

“That’s very late. I made it so that there wouldn’t be any problem working on the album.”

They finished recording early February. Even with package production in mind, 6 months is taking too long.

“The record has already been completed. It’s coming out the next month because of marketing. We’re going after the holiday season.”

“Oh, I see.”

“The Boston Philharmonic needs to gain some attention from this too. They’ve been receiving public attention since they revealed that you recorded in February, so that’ll continue. It’s all business after recording.”

When they came out into the living room, Isaac Stern went into the kitchen and skillfully made coffee.

“So, did you rest well in Korea?”

“Yes. I just kept sleeping.”

“But you didn’t just sleep. You said you were going to rest. How did you think of coming up with such a masterpiece? You should really rest when you can.”

Isaac Stern set a coffee down in front of Jun Hyuk, who just laughed, and settled into the large sofa.

“Then shall we talk a bit about the piece?”

“The piece? Oh, sure.”

“The title is Concerto for Violin and Piano in D Minor, ‘Choral,’ right?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll just ask one thing. Did you really write it with Beethoven in mind?”

“I did it thinking about how the Queen Elisabeth Competition has the piano and violin, but I thought of the foundation as a choral symphony. The subtitle is ‘Choral.’”

“Why Beethoven? Isn’t it too much of a challenge?”

“I never thought of it as a challenge. I just started it because I thought it’d be fun to work on... I guess that’s how it turned out?”

“Fun... That’s good too. Let’s see if the world sees it as fun or as a challenge.”

Isaac Stern could not stop smiling even as he drank coffee.

“The competition judges are going to be startled.”

“Excuse me?”

“The score itself is huge. Most entries are about 10 minutes. I’m pretty sure this will be the first ever masterpiece of such a length. And... he he.”

Isaac Stern was about to speak when he started laughing. Jun Hyuk watched him with an expression wondering if senility had set in.

“Ah, sorry. I keep laughing when I think about the National Orkest van Belgie. I can’t stop picturing them perplexed.”

“Why? Is there a problem?”

Could it be because there are not enough members in the Belgian orchestra?

“If this piece wins in December, you’ll have to go to Belgium right away. You need to go into rehearsals.”

“Isn’t the competition finals in April?”

“The difficulty is too high. They’ll need to practice for a while in order to perform at the finals.”

“Surely not. They are the national orchestra.”

“No, it’s not ‘surely not’. I showed this to the maestro of the New York Philharmonic to ask for his opinion.”

As soon as he said the New York Philharmonic, Jun Hyuk’s eyes widened. His heart

beat at the thought of it.

“He said that he guesses 2 to 3 months. He can’t say that the National Orchestra of Belgium is better than the New York Philharmonic.”

“If it’s the New York Philharmonic, isn’t it Maestro Dimitris Carras? The Greek genius conductor who started at age 25.”

“Yeah. He’s famous for perfect song interpretations. If he says two or three months, that’s exact.”

“Did he give you an assessment of my song?”

“Of course. How could he see a piece like this and not say anything?”

Isaac Stern saw Jun Hyuk’s sparkling eyes and thought of Dimitris Carras’ sparkling eyes when he first saw Jun Hyuk’s score.

“I only showed him the score at first. I didn’t say your name. He didn’t say anything for a while and then after praising it a ton, do you know what he said?”

“What did he say?”

Jun Hyuk was anxious to hear what the undeniable top maestro of the century said about his own work.

“He said that 2 geniuses will lead the world of music in the 21st century. Composer of ‘Inferno’ Jun and the person who created this new ‘Choral Concerto’. Ha ha.”

Isaac Stern saw Jun Hyuk’s flushed cheeks and realized that this young genius still does not have certainty regarding his own work. There must be various reasons, but he thought that the biggest reason might be that his standards for pieces are too high.

“I heard that assessment and didn’t tell him your name until the end. He was tremendously curious. He he.”

This occasional child-like appearance from this man over 70 does not seem like that of an industry mogul.

“Wait until August, since he has performances abroad right now. When he come back,

I'll introduce you two. Get a chance to talk over dinner or something. Dimitris is also going to be shocked once he finds out that you wrote 'Choral Symphony'."

Isaac Stern stopped laughing jokingly and his voice became low.

"There's something I'm curious about. Can I ask?"

"Yes. Of course."

"What are you going to do with the pieces you've written so far? Are you going to keep leaving them in Mr. Yoon's safe?"

"There isn't a song that I really want to show to the world. I like making new songs more."

"It's a pity, but there's nothing I can do. Do as you please."

He said that it is a pity, but his expression is not so. Artists do not want to reveal their past works the more they excel. Geniuses are those whose future works are more anticipated than their past works are.

"Then what are you going to do until December? Do you have any plans? And I don't mean your intention to put everything into composing."

"I have nothing to say if you put it like that."

He had been thinking that it would be good to make music since he has a good studio in his apartment, but there was nothing to include in his plans if he excludes that.

"Then I'll propose 2 things. Pick one."

Isaac Stern sat next next to Jun Hyuk.

"The first is traveling. I recommend South America. I want to suggest enjoying the freedom and nature of South America."

Jun Hyuk did not really want to travel again after traveling Europe for 2 months, so his expression did not change. Isaac Stern watched Jun Hyuk's expression and spoke again.

“The other is studying.”

“Studying?”

“Yeah. Didn’t you receive special classes at Clayton? That’s what the school said. They said that you were very active in that class. What do you think about starting it again? I’ll invite a teacher to come once or twice a week. Not music but subjects like literature, art, and philosophy.”

Jun Hyuk showed much more interest in studying than he did in traveling.

“Isn’t broadening the width of thought an extremely important element for people who create?”

“I guess it is.”

“I’m not telling you to make the decision now. Take your time to think about it.”

“No. I’ll study. The thing I actually regretted most about leaving Clayton was not being able to take the special classes.”

“Great. Then I’ll get it ready. Just keep it in mind.”

Isaac Stern did not forget his last piece of advice as he was leaving Jun Hyuk’s apartment,

“Jun. Don’t be alone too much, and invite some friends to have some fun. Throw some parties. The best thing about having a large apartment is that it’s great to have parties in.”

Chapter 183

When the Inferno album was released in mid-June, another craze came and went. When it sold 400,000 in just 1 month, it was estimated that it would easily sell 2 million and could even go up to 4 million.

It is the result of hearing that it is an innovative song that opens the door to a new musical genre, even bringing in a customer base devoted to classical music.

Once there were only complaints in the Amazon reviews online however, it changed to an entirely different angle. The general view and anger that they had spent money to listen to noise started spreading through social media. Due to the severe criticism of the public, the sales graph plummeted starting with the 2nd month.

The classical single album with the highest recorded sales is Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, Jose Carreras, and Zubin Mehta's live concert album, 'The Three Tenors in Concert: Live in Rome, 1990'.

It reached 12 million in sales and people do not have to be classical fanciers to have heard the music at least once. These kinds of stars are necessary in making a classical album into a hit.

Even a person who has never listened to music conducted by Berlin Philharmonic's Karajan can recognize a picture of him with a face full of anguish. With this level of awareness, he was able to record an incredible sale of 200,000 albums.

No matter how much critics give Inferno rave reviews, it could not win the one word 'noise' written on the internet and not even the jazz fans who had accepted Jun Hyuk were in favor of it.

The Inferno album was not able to surpass 1 million in the end, and was pushed to the corners of shopping malls.

Curiosity does not become a driving force for increasing sales. Inferno was forgotten by the public and was only discussed among maestros of their own league. The premiere is still left.



Amelia returned in the middle of July and was so shocked when she saw Isaac Stern's apartment that she yelled. The apartment she had heard about from Jun Hyuk was not so luxurious.

She had attended many banquets held for people in the music world, and could guess what this apartment was used for. This is not the kind of apartment that they lend to maestros who come from different areas.

It must be one of President Stern's several houses in New York, and a place used to hold parties.

She could tell how much special treatment President Stern gives Jun Hyuk from the way he gave the whole apartment to him.

She was also surprised by the piece he would be submitting to the Queen Elisabeth Competition. She had the same reaction that everyone else had

"Jun, anyone who sees this is going to say that it's crazy. You're saying you want to compare with Beethoven?"

She saw the whole score and could not stop admiring with 'Oh my God!'

"Really? It's that bad?"

"No. It's crazy because it's comparable. It would be normal for someone not to match up to Beethoven."

Amelia placed kisses all over Jun Hyuk's face and took the piano part of the score. She played the 2nd and 3rd movements, and got up from the piano.

"They'll have to change the finals calendar around a lot."

"Why?"

"They always give 1 week to practice the finals song. But how can someone learn this in 1 week? There's no way."

It is not a known song. The 5 piano and violin finalists are going to receive a

tremendous and large song, and are going to have to show their ability. Amelia counted on her fingers as she spoke.

“I recorded Brahms’ Piano Concerto No. 1 with the BBC Orchestra this time. I had already memorized all of Brahms’ concerto, practiced it hundreds of times, and it’s been included in my performance repertoires dozens of times. On top of that, we still went into rehearsal 3 times.”

Amelia shook her head and asserted,

“1 week? Impossible. I’m positive they’ll completely change the competition schedule.”

“They might not. It might look hard in the beginning, but they’ll realize that it’s easier once they get a little used to it.”

“Really? I couldn’t tell yet.”

“If you memorize the score, it suddenly gets easy. I kept the performers in mind and didn’t leave any margin for error.”

Mozart’s songs are not hard to approach in the beginning. Special techniques are not needed, and there are not severe changes. Just as there are a lot of famous songs in pop that use 3 simple chords, Mozart also created great music from simple melodies.

As one knows the piano more and more however, it becomes harder to express Mozart’s songs. There is a lot of margin for the performers. As difficult as Jun Hyuk’s piano part seems, there is no margin.

“And I need to win in order for the schedule to be changed or not.”

“Are you joking? That doesn’t even need to be said. Of course you’re the winner.”

The starting point of thought is different. While other competitors go up against each other, he is going up against Beethoven. This difference is bound to chase the other participants out.



Amelia was fascinated by Jun Hyuk’s special classes, which took place at home. She

had never felt interest in anything outside of piano and music. Jun Hyuk on the other hand, kept asking questions and concentrated in his philosophy class to make it run over 2 hours.

“Jun, do you like studying that much? Doesn’t your head hurt enough from looking at scores?”

“No, it’s the total opposite. I can forget music when I focus on other things. It’s better the more complicated it is.”

“That’s how much the melodies don’t stop in your head?”

She is realizing it for the first time since she started living with Jun Hyuk. There is a new melody and rhythm in his head every waking moment.

When she first knew this, she could not hide her envy. But the second she figured that it might not be a blessing, she tried to help Jun Hyuk put his attention elsewhere as much as she could.

This was also a factor in her saying that they could not leave such a large house alone and started inviting acquaintances over for simple parties every week. Because she knows Jun Hyuk’s personality well, she did not invite people who are loud or boastful. Since she only invited conscientious people who know the paths that they are on, there were no loud parties that Isaac Stern suggested.

Danny was also in the off season and came to New York when he received Amelia’s call. He who had always gone around telling people that he is Jun Hyuk’s roommate and best friend, had changed a lot over 1 year.

After the Tchaikovsky Competition last summer, Danny had finished up the tour with the runner ups and had jumped into the world of professionals. He seemed like an entirely different person.

“Damn. I thought everything would work out if I made it into the top ranking of the Tchaikovsky Competition, but that was just the start. There are so many people running in front of me.”

“Is that so? Amelia’s been doing a lot of performances from even before the competition.”

“That’s different. Before Tchaikovsky, she was mostly active in her home country Argentina. I’m famous in Canada too. I came out on TV a bunch of times.”

However, Danny kept sighing.

“Amelia is of a different class from me. How many albums does she have out? And in Europe at that.”

There is no difference between Danny’s circumstance and in Colin who is going around clubs and small concerts in the western region to make a prospective rock band known. He had only performed with a famous orchestra in a big city twice in 1 year. Even that did not receive the evaluation that it was successful.

Instead, he is taking in a tight schedule of going around in small European towns.

“Anyway, I’m going to go out for the Long-Thibaud, Menuhin, and Queen Elisabeth next year and win all of them. I have a lot of experience now, so I’ll be able to perform without being nervous.

Jun Hyuk was about to say something when he said Queen Elisabeth, but he shut his mouth. Amelia had blinked at him.

For the sake of fairness, a win is canceled if the composer’s score and win are leaked. Even if they are friends, he cannot commit a misconduct. All of the participants are putting their lives on the line just as Danny is doing.

Amelia spent about a month with Jun Hyuk. Once the season starts in September, she needs to take in another packed schedule.

Chapter 184

At the end of August, there was also a person who came back to New York for the regular season after completing a world tour. It was none other than New York Philharmonic's standing conductor, Dimitris Carras. The first item on his schedule upon arriving in New York was to visit Jun Hyuk's apartment with Isaac Stern.

Dimitris Carras was shocked when he saw Jun Hyuk open the front door and welcome them. He had not imagined that this would be the house of the composer of Inferno.

"My friends sent me pictures they took with you and said that it's a face that I must remember. I didn't know what they were talking about at first, but you don't know how surprised I was when I was told you're the composer of Inferno. I was expecting you to be a white-haired old man. Ha ha."

After laughing refreshingly, Carras pat President Stern on the back.

"Isaac. You signed on yet another amazing treasure. I guess I won't receive a good treatment from Stern Corporation from now on. You'll have 2 young geniuses at the head."

When Dimitris Carras debuted as a conductor, the first person to hand him a contract was a 35-year-old Isaac Stern. He did it with the promise to make him the standing conductor of one of the top 3 philharmonics in the world.

And 20 years later, Isaac Stern kept that promise. 5 years have already passed since he became the standing conductor and art director of the New York Philharmonic at the age of 55. The two men are friends who have confided in each other their whole lives.

"That's about right. Even if you say that you want to terminate your contract with us now, it won't matter to me. He he."

"Good. Then that means I'll have to think differently too."

Even while they had been chatting jokingly, Carras kept glancing at the front door.

"Isaac. When is the person who wrote the choral concerto coming? Jun, have you met

him already?”

Dimitris Carras looked at the two of them in curiosity and Isaac Stern could not hold back his laughter.

“Who are you waiting for when he’s already living in the apartment? Isn’t he sitting right in front of you? Ha ha.”

Dimitris Carras just blinked for a moment. He is not understanding what Isaac Stern means when he says that the person is already living here. His eyes grew larger when he looked at Jun Hyuk smiling at him.

“Then... Then is it you? Goodness!”

No one could speak until the New York Philharmonic’s standing conductor’s surprise disappeared.



“What do you think? Won’t it become quite big news?”

“I’m not sure. It could become news, but isn’t it a completely different melody and rhythm? The only common factor is the timing of each movement – and there’s going to be a bit of a difference according to the conductor – the vocal appearing in the 4th movement. Isn’t it only this? The song’s subtitle is ‘Choral’ but other people put Beethoven to it and this concerto was put by the composer himself, so they can’t be seen as the same.”

Dimitris Carras spoke as if it is insignificant.

“They’ll try to find fault with the vocal’s lyrics ‘Ode an die Freude’ but it’s just a citation of Friedrich Schiller’s ‘Ode to Joy’.”

“Aren’t you looking at it too lightly? That’s enough to find an issue in.”

“He he. You’ll win anyway. The judges will realize as well. The more they argue, the more they are proving that this choral concerto is a match for Beethoven’s choral symphony. There’s no reason for it to become a hot topic if it’s just copying because they can just eliminate the submission.”

He means that the more it becomes news and the more disagreements there are, it is the same as their admitting the level of the piece.

“Honestly, next year’s competition committee is lucky.”

“Of course. I’m sure this level of work is going to raise the competition’s position.”

Isaac Stern agreed with him, but Dimitris Carras shook his head.

“That’s not what I mean. Isaac, assuming Jun’s song wins what do you think will happen? You can’t imagine it?”

Isaac Stern and Jun Hyuk just stared at Dimitris Carras. They could not think of anything in particular.

“They can take care of everything in the finals with this one song. Piano, violin, and even vocals. Don’t you think it’ll be really interesting?? It’ll be important who they become placed in groups with as well. For the first time, the finalists will have to make draws to configure their groups. Like with the World Cup. Ha ha.”

“I see. So it’s possible to take care of the competition part with Jun Hyuk’s song alone. I didn’t think about the vocals.”

Isaac Stern hit his forehead. The finals will become very interesting. The competition committee will certainly not overlook this aspect.

“Jun, don’t worry. If your choral concerto doesn’t win, that itself will become the beginning of a hot topic. It won’t match the public opinion and the competition’s authority will be groundless. I’ll be the first to criticize them.”

The maestro of the New York Philharmonic was sure that Jun Hyuk would win. Since a great is this certain, President Stern did not think that he would need to pressure the competition committee.

Dimitris Carras brought up what he was more curious about than the competition.

“Jun. From what I hear, you quit the Inferno performance with the Boston Philharmonic because you said that you didn’t want to use shortcuts?”

“Yes. I thought that and so did the orchestra members.”

Dimitris looked regretful at Jun Hyuk's answer.

"It would have been better to hold the concert even if you had to use a shortcut. Conducting the Boston Philharmonic would have been a very valuable experience. When you become a candidate for world renowned philharmonics from now on, it'll be a really important resume. You shouldn't have been so stubborn."

Dimitris Carras had gone through a lot before becoming the standing conductor of the New York Philharmonic and knows the process better than anyone else does. Not everyone who takes on the role of operating an orchestra is an expert in music. There are a lot of politics.

Dimitris has absolutely no doubt that Jun Hyuk is the future standing conductor of the New York Philharmonic. The reason why he is mentioning the importance of experience is that he wants Jun Hyuk to be standing on the podium right this moment.

He did not think that there would be more special cases like the Boston Philharmonic from now on.

"Jun, you don't have any thoughts to conduct Inferno now?"

"No. The album came out well. I think that most of what I want is in there. From now on, what I want to see is how other maestros interpret it differently."

Once Dimitris realized that Jun Hyuk has no lingering regrets for Inferno, his lips curled into a smile.

"Really? Then I'd like to put it on stage next year. Do you have any good tips?"

Isaac Stern was startled and spoke,

"Hold on, Maestro. Are you preparing now? Do you think it'll be possible?"

"Of course. Why?"

"I'm sure you've heard the album."

"Of course I heard it. I liked it. It wasn't that painful or anything."

Even Jun Hyuk was surprised by his nonchalant tone. He had seen for himself how

much the Boston Philharmonic suffered. The conductor, Patrick Quinn, had said that he barely listened through to the 4th movement.

“What is that? Is that for real? This is surprising.”

“What is? When I looked at the score honestly, I didn’t think it’d be possible. But it was completely different when I listened to the album. I understood Jun Hyuk’s interpretation. The subject of Inferno isn’t pain. It’s completely different.”

Dimitris turned his attention to Jun Hyuk.

“Jun, this might be rude but answer honestly. Isn’t Inferno based on your experiences?”

“Excuse me?”

“You’ve experienced severe pain in the past, right? Whether you were abused by some severe violence... and you expressed that with music. Isn’t that so?”

“That’s... that’s right. How did you know?”

Jun Hyuk’s voice trembled. How could he figure out Jun Hyuk’s experiences by listening to his music? It is something he has not told anyone other than Yoon Kwang Hun.

“Do you think someone who hasn’t experienced pain can relay the feeling to this extent to the audience? That kind of expressiveness would go beyond a genius, and it would be inhuman. It would be impossible for even you unless you experienced it.”

Dimitris looked at a surprised Jun Hyuk and spoke carefully.

“And the pain in Inferno was definitely physical, not mental. I also grew up under an abusive father. I could tell because I had experienced it to some extent. It’s something I had been forgetting completely, but the memories came up.”

He is showing the power of time in speaking of painful memories of his youth in such a calm manner.

“Dimitris, why is that important? Just because Jun Hyuk experienced it? No one gets used to violence.”

Isaac Stern lost interest in what method this impressive maestro knows.

“I objectified Inferno as I listened to it. Shall I say I was looking at someone who is experiencing pain? That someone could be me when I was a child, or Jun. It was okay once I changed the perspective.”

“Is that possible?”

It is easily said, but the possibility is another issue. Even if Jun Hyuk had not asked it, Isaac Stern would have.

“Why? You can’t believe it? I think it’s more unbelievable who created a song like Inferno. I’m sure everyone has their own advantages.”

“What exactly does it mean that you objectify it?”

“It means I don’t empathize with it. Hm... like watching a horror movie? It’s uncomfortable to see the characters tortured and killed, but I can bear to watch it because I’m not the one going through it. And if you think about the set as you watch a movie? It’s easier if you think about the cameras, staff, NGs, and laughing actors. I thought I’d be able to maintain that feeling.”

“Then are the conductor and performance just playing the role of delivering?”

“Right. That could be a more accurate explanation. I’m just a messenger to the audience.”

Isaac Stern was watching the two men speak when he brought up the question that would not go away.

“Then what about the members of the New York Philharmonic? Are you saying that they can objectify it like you can?”

“No, not yet. But a few are already capable of playing it perfectly. We’re just trying out different ways right now.”

There are a lot of people in the world with talent. And each of those talents has the color of the person they belong to. Jun Hyuk could understand why Dimitris is famous for his perfect song interpretation.

“What is this? I was going to find out if there are any good tips to performing it, but I’ve only told you my know-how. Ha ha.”

“Maestro, don’t worry. I’ll seal my lips.”

“Then can you promise me one thing?”

“Anything.”

“Once you end the competition with this great choral concerto, I’d like to put in on stage for the very first time with the New York Philharmonic. What do you think?”

A proposal he had not been expecting. Jun Hyuk bolted up and grabbed the maestro’s hand.

“It’s an honor. I feel like I should be the one asking for the favor.”

“Listen to the end. There’s one more thing.”

Dimitris smiled playfully and Jun Hyuk’s heart started beating. Is he thinking of leaving the conducting to Jun Hyuk as well?

“Let’s go on stage together. I’ll conduct your choral concerto and you’ll conduct Beethoven’s choral symphony. We’ll perform the two songs together.”

If they play the 2 songs in succession, it will approach 3 hours. If they put in an intermission, it is at least 3 and a half hours. It will become a tremendous event.

Perform Beethoven? And with the best in the world, the New York Philharmonic? Jun Hyuk thought his heart would burst.

Isaac Stern was even more excited than Jun Hyuk was.

“That’s amazing. Leave it to me. I’ll make sure this concert happens. I’ll make New York come alive for you. Ha ha.”

Isaac Stern was already drawing a picture of New York City on that day. Placards and posters that will be all over the city. The meeting of a young genius and a great maestro. And Beethoven.

Chapter 185

This is different from how the Queen Elisabeth Competition is progressed in reality. This was created by the writer in interest of the story.

In October, submissions for the composition section of the Queen Elisabeth Competition began.

12 judges gathered in one place to go over 100 pieces that flew in from over 30 countries.

54 year old judge Marion Cotillard is the standing conductor of the Berlin Deutsche Symphony Orchestra. She was given the 'Nobel Prize of contemporary music,' the Grawemeyer, for a 30 minute cello concerto that she composed especially to perform with a movie to allow the audience to interact with music and film.

Most of the competition entries are contemporary music, so the judges were configured appropriately. They investigated their past statements and actions to rule out anyone who venerates the classics while disparaging contemporary music. It is to eliminate the concern that they may not be able to evaluate the value of the music due to prejudice.

"Alright. I'm sure everyone knows, but I'll say it again in case. There will be experimental and avant garde music. But we need to keep in mind that we are evaluating music. We cannot choose a winner just because the song is novel. A score that we look at and want to hear the music for! This is the best criteria for judging."

The judging began with Committee head Marion Cotillard's greeting words.

The judges split into groups of 3 people and begin the trial. The trial is held so that if all 3 people are in agreement, the piece is eliminated.

Songs that clear the trial go back to primary screening. In the primary screening, all 12 judges go over each song and must choose between pass and fail. The pieces are ordered in the number of passes they receive, and they choose the top 12 to go into the finals.

The judges discuss each song and decide on 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places with the last

standing pieces.

The majority of entries are short songs of 10 to 30 minutes. There are songs that are entirely 'experimental' and there are songs that squeeze 'emotion' out. Pieces that only seek novelty were filtered out by the 3 judges.

3 judges had their last and most curious piece in front of them, and scoffed.

"Choral'...It can't be what we're thinking of, right?"

"So there are people who compose such large works these days."

Looking at the thickness of the score alone, they could tell that it is a symphony and would take over 1 hour to perform.

"I just hope it's not a song that's been stretched out by unnecessarily repeating a thematic progression."

Notes filling up the score. And there were so many instruments organized within it that it was hard to see the flow of the song in one run through. They needed to look over this one song with as much time as they had taken to look at over 10 songs.

The 3 judges took almost 3 hours to look over the score and only sat in silence. They did not say anything in evaluation during the trial. It is only a place to state whether or not it will be eliminated. If all 3 decided to eliminate it, not even Mozart could refute.

The judges need to be particularly careful because they do not know who the composers of the entries are.

"Well. How do we interpret this....."

"Criticism isn't our responsibility. We need to do that in the finals. All we need to do now is make a decision."

When 1 judge spoke up, the other 2 shut their mouths.

"Then shall we make a decision?"

The 2 people lightly nodded their heads.

“Will you tell me? Does this song need to go up to finals?”

“Oxi (No).”

“Nai (Yes).”

Nai and oxi is Greek and used in official matters to contribute opinion. It is used commonly in the west and is used when the U.S. Congress passes bills.

“So it’s one vote each. Then my opinion doesn’t matter. I’ll put it up to finals.”

“Why don’t you tell us your opinion anyway?”

“I’m Nai.”

Jun Hyuk’s song received 2 votes in favor and went up to finals.

20 out of over 100 songs made it to the finals, so the competition is 5:1. There are less works that made it to the finals than in previous years. There are normally about 30, but it has been reduced by more than 10.

This means that either there were a lot of submissions that did not meet standards, or that the judges’ standards had gone up.

The judges gathered for the final evaluation and started talking about the preliminary.

“There seems to be something influencing young composers, doesn’t it? Inferno?”

“Is that so? I found a few in the entries I saw as well.”

“The attempt to touch on physical sensations as is done in Inferno is good, but it’s not something that anyone can do. Why don’t they know that putting one delicate sound out of place will reduce it to nothing but noise?”

“They must know. They just don’t have the ability to express it.”

“Is that why there are fewer entries that have come up to the finals?”

“Pretty much. Looking at objective numbers, we could say that at least 10 entries were trying to copy Inferno.”

Then, the committee head said something meaningful,

“What would the results have been if Inferno had been an entry in this competition?”

The judges could not answer this sudden question easily. They were all busy recalling the first time they heard the album.

“Anyone who could read the score without stopping would have thrown it to the side, saying that it is noise. Anyone who could appreciate it wouldn’t have been able to read the score properly. Then would it be eliminated or would it win?”

There were people who had turned red. There are those who still think that Inferno is nothing but noise. But no one confessed to this.

“We might have eliminated a song like Inferno today. There’s nothing we can do about it. We’re average people who might not be able to recognize a piece by a young composer who is better than we are. But let’s be that much more careful with the final assessment so as not to make the same mistake twice.”

After committee head Marion Cotillard spoke, the preliminary portion was completed. They would have to gather the next morning and choose 12 out of 20 entries.

The next morning, the 12 judges talked over coffee and prepared for the final evaluation that would soon be starting. They spoke about each entry, but everyone could tell that they were saving their words.

It was obvious that they were avoiding any misunderstanding that could arise from something they say.

With the committee head’s light greeting as a start, the final evaluation commenced with everyone picking up a score. They looked over the 20 pieces again in silence.

Unlike previous years, time passed quickly and progress was slow. Everyone was preoccupied looking at one tremendous score that they did not realize time was passing.

When the 12 judges were done assessing the 20 pieces, it was already dark outside.

“Alright. Then shall we see the results?”

The committee head received the committee's sheet and announced the order of pieces by the passes they received. Of the 20 songs, only 3 had received 12 passes. All of the judges had given them passes.

"Registration number 67. Title Concerto for Violin and Piano in D Minor, 'Choral'...7 votes. It is in 8th place."

She looked up from the sheet and spoke,

"The other works can all be said to be expressions of contemporary music, but this one is classical. I'll just call it 'Choral Concerto' from now on."

The committee head continued tallying the results.

"So we will decide on the top 11 works. Are there any objections?"

Everyone shook their heads to indicate that they accept the results.

"Then tell us about the two songs that are both in 12th place with 3 votes each. We need to drop one."

No one jumped in to speak. 3 votes. It is an ambiguous number. It is too high to say that someone forced themselves to vote, but too low in quality to expect it to go in competition.

The best method in this situation is to look for reasons to pass it rather than to drop it. One of the judges worked up the courage and used this method.

"I'll tell you what I think. First, I'd like to reveal that I marked pass for both of the pieces. And I think that both are great. If asked to choose one however, I will choose 'Spiral'."

Once someone spoke up, it became much easier to share their opinions. Another judge's evaluation was added on.

"It's a sound that is well expressed to stimulate visual images. I think that it's a great attempt to liken the dizziness and dual structure that Spiral's image gives to human emotion."

They all agreed with the evaluation of the song. If they need to choose one of the two

songs, the weight tipped to 'Spiral' and there was no opposing opinion.

Anyway, being tied for 12th place means that they are not awarded. It just means that there is a slight extension.

No one spoke after the two people gave their opinions. The committee head looked around at everyone's expressions for a moment and made the last decision.

"Since no one has any opposition, I will assume that everyone is in agreement. The last song for finals is 'Spiral'."

The 12 final songs had been chosen. From now on, the true judging will begin.

Chapter 186

“I’m sure you all know, but these 12 songs are now at the same starting point. The ranking is meaningless now. We didn’t choose the best but just had them pass the baseline. Please keep in mind that they are just boxers who have passed the weight test. Now, we’re only thinking of the best regardless of the ranking from yesterday. We’ll be starting the first vote.”

The 12 judges wrote the song that they think is number 1 and handed it to the committee head.

After checking the titles written on the papers multiple times, she looked surprised. The result is completely different from what she had been expecting.

“Well, this is an interesting result. I thought the result would come out in one try.”

Marion Cotillard put the papers on the conference room table and announced the result.

“6 votes, 5 votes, 1 vote. As none of them have over $\frac{2}{3}$ of the votes, or over 8, we need to vote again.”

The winning song needs to have 8 out of 12 votes. They will either debate the songs and vote again until there is a result. If they vote hundreds of times and the committee head believes that they cannot come to a conclusion, the competition rule is to decide on a 2nd and 3rd place without a 1st place winner.

“6 votes were for ‘World of Europe,’ 5 votes are for ‘Choral Concerto’. The last one with 1 vote is ‘Deception’.”

After knowing the results, a few people had looks of disbelief.

“I think we need to discuss at this point.”

In contrast to when they had been choosing the 12th place, someone started speaking immediately after the committee head spoke as though he had been waiting. It was in a high voice.

“Honestly, I don’t understand. I thought there would be votes in opposition, but 5 votes? Isn’t it a blessing that such a large song has been created so perfectly in the 21st century?”

“I assume you’re talking about the choral concerto?”

“Yes. That’s the one I’m talking about.”

“Don’t you think you’re overestimating it? A large song does not equate with a great song.”

“Do you think I’m only saying this because of the length of the song and the number of instruments organized in it? If the choral concerto is not a great song, what is?”

If the interpretation of the work had been different, it would not have been so frustrating. Everyone knew that the cause for opposing the song lay elsewhere.

“Isn’t it a song following Beethoven’s choral?”

“Following? Only the vocal is the same. Isn’t it the Schiller poem that everyone knows? They just used the same song. It’s an entirely different music. On top of that, it’s not in German but in English.”

“It’s not only that. This was created with the purpose of being compared with Beethoven. How could the instrument times be the same by movement? The number of bars is the same as well.”

The reason for opposition eventually came out. It was the rogue intent to drag Beethoven in for attention. Their sincerity, however, did not appear.

“Very well. We admit that the composer’s intention is too obvious. But why are we trying to censor composers’ thoughts as judges? We need to judge based on the music itself.”

“That’s right. The image that Beethoven’s choral symphony has – a large song, vocal, and Schiller’s poem. You’re dragging this through as though it is plagiarism...”

“Who said that it is plagiarism?”

Even the opposing side was defending it against plagiarism.

“Just looking at the 1st movement with a subject that is continued perfectly, it is different from the abilities of other participants. And what about the symphony of the 2nd and 3rd movements? I felt like I was looking at the harmony of soprano duet. There’s nothing more to say about the 4th movement. I felt like my heart was collapsing around that catharsis.”

The other judges were only listening. What they had felt about the song had not been very different. They just differentiate between feeling and evaluation.

“I can’t remember the last time I felt something like this... Did you get this kind of emotion from ‘World of Europe’? Isn’t it a song that combines many European folk songs in order to throw awareness of a problem?”

As the praises for the choral symphony continued, the real reason for not giving it their votes came out.

“Can’t we simply think of it as the composer having some fun? If it hadn’t been for the vocal part with lyrics from Schiller’s ‘Ode to Joy,’ it would have gotten all 12 votes without argument.”

“Are you saying that we should go upstream to the era of classical again?”

“What are you talking about? What era is there to music? If the work is good, that should be everything for the evaluation.”

The role of the music’s value changed with changing times. Music has always changed with the times. The judges’ true thoughts for not giving votes are that they believe the choral concerto to be retrogressive to the era.

It is an evaluation that is hard to say.

“There there. Let’s calm down. Isn’t our selection criteria clear? The song that we want to hear the orchestra play. That is the selection criteria.”

The committee head must have thought that the evaluation of the choral symphony had come out with this, and her intense atmosphere settled a bit.

“I’ll tell you my last thoughts. I’m looking back at today’s intense discussion. Not a single person gave his or her opinion on the song in 1st place, ‘Magic of Europe’. No one said why it is better than the choral concerto or what they felt after seeing it.”

Marion Cotillard's stern assessment made everyone quiet. The 1st place song did not have a presence in today's intense debate.

"The sun has already set. We'll meet again tomorrow to continue the discussion. If the same results come out in the 2nd vote, we might have a 'not applicable' in 1st place again for the first time in a while. You all worked hard."

Though it was not late, Marion Cotillard quickly ended the meeting. She wanted to give them plenty of time to confirm whether their evaluations today were based on music or their individual beliefs.

She came back home and got in the bath to relieve her exhaustion when the phone rang.

"Madame Cotillard. This is Isaac Stern."

"Oh, Mr. Stern. It's been a while."

Marion Cotillard leaned up from her bath. He is someone she cannot ignore as he provides a lot of support to the European music industry. There are a lot of conductors who had been in the Deutsche Symphony Orchestra, which she is currently in, who are related to him.

"I know it's rude, but I called late because I figured that you would be busy with your judging duties in the daytime."

"It's alright."

"I actually have a lot of interest in this year's competition."

"When did you not? You always kept an eye on it to take any promising rookies."

"Ha ha. I see. Then I should say that I have extra interest."

She knew that President Stern has a lot of interest in all competitions, but she also knows that he has never personally contacted the committee head. What could it be?

"I'll get straight to the point. I want to show the 12 final songs to maestros all over the world. I'm going to find out which song it is that they want to play and compare it with the results of the competition."

Marion Cotillard bolted up from the bath. What does this mean? What is he talking about all of a sudden?

“Mr. Stern. I hear this as you saying that you don’t trust the judges.”

She could not help but sound on edge. Comparing the results with external factors itself means that he is questioning their fairness.

“That’s not what I mean. I just want to know the difference. The difference between the music that conductors want to perform and the music that survives in a competition.”

President Stern’s voice remained calm.

“You put it well, but doesn’t it mean that you’re telling us to do well because you’re watching us?”

“Isn’t that inevitable? How many people out there are watching for the competition results?”

“Of course I’m sure you’ll release those results to the press?”

“I’ll have to if there is a big difference with the competition results. Someone will have to explain those results so the people who are watching can understand.”

It is a complete threat. He does not reveal what he wants though, so it is an ambiguous threat. Marion Cotillard did not want to hear anymore. He is basically insulting her character.

“Mr. Stern, I’m offended. I will hang up now.”

After hanging up, she lowered her body into the bath again. Famous maestros all over the world would inevitably choose the choral concerto. She had also voted for the choral concerto. But she still could not know the end result.

She thought for a while and came out when she could feel the bath get cold, and laid on the bed.

Whatever anyone says, there is only one result. She can only enforce one thing with the judges. It is the committee head’s duty.

The song that they want to hear in performance. That is the winning song.

Chapter 187

Beethoven's music is called a perfect building at times. Instead of being chased by inspiration to complete it, it is as though after designing it, the weak parts are reinforced, and beautiful aesthetics are added to fill in any empty spaces to create a full building.

The choral concerto is a piece that follows this kind of Beethoven's thought perfectly. However, the present age wants to see new conversion of ideas that make people think though it may not be perfect.

"Committee Head. If we choose this song, it means that we're undermining the development of the music we've advanced until now. Isn't it difficult as it is to endure with contemporary music? If we choose a song like one of the past, we'll have music from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic ages flooding in next time."

The real reason for being against Jun Hyuk's song came out. Their desire to block not the music but a retrogression from the flow of time is even making them forget the nature of music.

"Is that really what you think? That songs like this will come flooding in? How many composers are capable of this! That is unreasonable. This may or may not come out once in every 100 years. It has been 200 years since the choral symphony came out. This means that one has come out in 200 years."

Just as it was yesterday, the opinions that they cannot go back to the past and that they need to simply accept the music by itself are standing against each other.

"You will all know that when choosing judges, anyone prejudiced toward modern music was excluded. But now that we're here, there is someone who really has a prejudice. Is anything that is a classical form an imitation and impure?"

It had reached personal attacks. If this is how they are going to speak, they can no longer hold the discussion. Marion Cotillard needs to prevent it before the matter grows worse.

"Everyone stop! This is all. Everyone stop speaking."

Marion Cotillard asked the competition board employee outside for coffee. Once all of the judges calm down, they will listen to what she has to say.

No one spoke for over 10 minutes as they drank coffee. Marion Cotillard checked everyone's faces to make sure that they calmed down, and spoke,

"Music needs to be more innovative and needs to develop. This is not the case with just music. This is necessary in art because the art we create today is a legacy that is passed on."

She spoke slowly and clearly.

"However, it is not for us to practice a new challenge. This is what artists and philosophers do. We just encourage them through this competition."

She looked at the judges and started to play her role,

"Alright everyone, please close your eyes."

Everyone closed their eyes.

"Empty your minds. And don't lose the one melody of the 12 works that is constantly ringing in your head. That is the song that you need to choose. Think about our dear 'Palais des Beaux-arts'."

The Palais des Beaux-arts was erected by famous Belgian architect Victor Horta in 1922 to 1929, and the beautiful art center is the pride of Brussels. It has the Henry Le Boeuf Hall a large concert hall with 2,200 seats, a chamber concert hall with 476 seats, a studio with 210 seats, and multi-purpose halls. It is called BOZAR in shorthand.

The biggest hall, Henry Le Boeuf, is the stage for the Belgian National Orchestra, Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Queen Elisabeth Competition final performance.

"The melody that you want to hear ringing out in that wonderful space. The song that you want to hear most. That is the song that you choose."

She could tell just by looking at the expressions of the judges with their eyes closed. Their faces show that they are thinking of the same song. Marion Cotillard had nothing more to say. The only thing left to do is give an honest vote with what their hearts are

telling them.

“With the 2nd vote in front of us, I will say one last thing before starting the vote. If you were all conductors, which song would you perform?”



“Then I will announce the results of the 2nd round of votes.”

All of the judges focused on Marion Cotillard.

“1st place, ‘Choral Concerto’ 10 votes. 2nd place, ‘World of Europe’ 2 votes. That is all. If anyone has objections, speak now.”

All of the judges except for 2 looked relieved. They did not have lingering regrets in the results because they had left everything to the melody and rhythm instead of a belief or rational thought like philosophy.

There were no objections to the votes that confirmed 2nd and 3rd places.

“Then check the ballot and if you don’t see anything amiss, sign the final report.”

Marion Cotillard looked pleased as she passed the voting sheet to the judges.

“Then shall we check to see whose work this is?”

Once the board employee received the results of the vote, he checked the 3 composers. After more than 10 minutes, the employee pulled out the list of composers and said,

“I will announce the composers. 1st place, Choral Concerto, Jun Hyuk Jang, Korea. 2nd place, World of Europe, Marlin Oscar Guggenheim IV, Austria. 3rd place, Deception, Jipuji Chang, China.”

The most familiar name to the judges is Guggenheim. The youngest son of a tremendously wealthy family in Austria. He is a young 20 year old showing exceptional talent in composition and the violin.

The rumor that the father used an entire orchestra in order to teach his young son the violin, shows how wealthy the family is.

“This year is quite peculiar. Normally, people over the age of 30 have good results in composition... I guess they are getting younger as time goes by.”

“The development of Asians doesn’t stop. It’s impressive.”

“Are the 2 Asian finalists complete rookies? The name seems familiar.”

One of the judges kept mumbling,

“Jun Hyuk Jang, Jun Hyuk Jang... I feel like I’ve heard the name before. Ah.....!”

He stopped mumbling and quickly started a search on the laptop.

Jun Hyuk Jang a.k.a. Jun. Conductor. Composer. Jazz & rock musician. Record: Symphony Inferno, Jazz Album ‘The First’.....

“In – Inferno!”

The judge who read the search results could not continue speaking. The other people who heard ‘Inferno’ gathered around the laptop.

“Look at this. No wonder the name seemed familiar. The composer of Choral Concerto is Inferno’s Jun. How could this be.”

“What? Are you talking about that Jun?”

“Could it be two people with the same name? Asian names do sound similar.....”

One of the judges quickly ran outside. He caught the board employee and gave him an order.

“We don’t know yet, so let’s wait. We need to confirm it for sure first.”

An employee came running into the conference room, panting.

“It’s... It’s right. It is the same person. We just checked with the phone number on the entry, and it was Stern Corporation. They say that he signed with the agency.”

Marion Cotillard finally understood why President Stern had called. She remembered that Jun Hyuk had signed on with Stern Corporation.

“The backlash will be big. The winning song is Jun’s.”

“Why would someone with such fame enter a competition? Does he want the laurels as well.....”

“Strictly speaking, he is still a rookie. It’s just that he doesn’t feel like one because his first song was so famous.”

The atmosphere in the conference room became excited due to this unexpected truth.

“There there. Let’s not be fazed by it. Our work is done. Let’s tell the committee about our decision, and then what do you think about getting a refreshing beer?”

Everyone left the conference room at Marion Cotillard’s suggestion. They went into a pub with a refreshed spirit that they had perfectly completed their homework. Belgium, the beer capital. All of the judges were thinking that they should drink a lot tonight. The hot topic of the night would of course become Jang Jun Hyuk.

Chapter 188

Jun Hyuk's score was relayed to the competition committee, the Belgium National Orchestra, and Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra right away. While 2 maestros were lost in the score in each office, the chairman of the committee was looking at the truck that had come with a delivery under his name.

"Who did you say it was?"

"President Isaac Stern of Stern Corporation sent this."

"Without saying anything else?"

"He said that he has prepared so that it can be practiced right away. He said that time would be tight."

The boxes unloading from the truck were full of Jun Hyuk's score, which had already been made into books.

"Store those boxes so none of them are leaked, and request a meeting with the maestro quickly. No – tell him I'll go to him myself."

The chairman of the committee ran to BOZAR art center.

"Maestro. Have you seen the winning score?"

"Yes. It's an incredible masterpiece. I'm sure you saw it as well?"

The two men looked at each other in puzzlement. Rather than an evaluation of the music, they looked at the score with worries about the competition schedule.

"Inferno's Jun came out with an entirely unexpected song this time. And in our Queen Elisabeth at that."

"Maestro. This is a good thing, right?"

"Of course. The competition's status will change."

It is in the form of the competition, but it is still a premiere. It is hard to premiere a masterpiece that is standing proudly against Beethoven's symphony on a stage like this.

"I don't know why I keep worrying first. President Isaac Stern must have already been sure of Jun's win, because he made the score into books and sent them over. I estimate that there are over 300 of them."

"Ha ha. His humor is still the same. You must have been surprised."

The maestro could only laugh when he heard that the scores had been sent over already in book form. It is a result that anyone could have anticipated, not just Isaac Stern. Though he heard that there are controversies in the screening process, it is a given that Jun Hyuk's 'Choral Concerto' should win.

"Don't worry because President Stern isn't someone who would go around telling people."

"He even left a message to start practicing right away."

"Yes. I do need a lot of scores right away. We need to hurry because the choir will also need it."

The chairman watched the maestro and cautiously spoke,

"Actually... We had a meeting as soon as we saw the winning score. We discussed the final performance....."

The maestro spoke while the chairman spoke carefully,

"Is this because of the winner, Jun? Because he's a genius who has already gained experience as visiting conductor of the Boston Philharmonic?"

"Yes. Our honest thoughts are that we would like to create a more exciting stage to bring the competition more attention from around the world."

"Do you want to leave the conducting to Jun?"

"The piano and violin have to perform with the Belgium National Orchestra and Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra in the final. Thinking of the final stage, isn't there not

enough time until the finals in April as President Stern said?”

The maestro frowned for a moment and spoke when he made up his mind,

“Chairman. Let’s do this. Let’s decide on who will conduct once the detailed schedule is out. And let’s discuss with President Stern. Check Jun’s schedule and ask him to join as soon as he can. Of course include conducting on stage in the cases.”

The chairman thanked the maestro for his positive answer multiple times and left.



Jun Hyuk’s eyes opened at dawn because of the noisy ringing of his phone. He frowned because he had only been asleep for 3 hours.

“Isaac. Are you awake already? So it’s the same in the East and West that older people sleep less.”

“What are you talking about? I’m still partying with beautiful women. He he. The weird thing is that a young man like you is sleeping at this time. Oh right. I didn’t call to brag. I’ll be at your house in an hour, so be ready.”

“I don’t need beautiful women and I don’t care for parties.”

“It’s not beautiful women or a party. You’ve been confirmed the winner. I just got the call. Well... It was bound to happen. Ha ha.”

He was not so happy he felt like he would jump up and down when he heard the fact that he won. Could it be because President Stern and the maestro of the New York Philharmonic had reinforced it in him multiple times? He just felt calm.

“Just pack lightly with some clothes. We’ll go to Belgium.”

“What? Belgium? At this time?”

“Yeah. The competition committee will look for you. Let’s go ahead of time and get some touring in. I know a really great pub. You’re going to love it too.”

“But aren’t you rushing it too much? We should make our moves once we are

contacted.”

“Jun, isn’t it better to tour Brussels than to stay home alone? And it’s much warmer over there.”

It did seem like charming Brussels would be better than lazing around at home.

“Alright. Then I’ll get ready.”

Jun Hyuk hung up the phone, packed a few things, and waited for Isaac Stern while sending text messages to a few people.

– Sir. I won the Queen Elisabeth Competition. We were just told.

– I’ll see you the day you conduct on stage for the finals. Don’t forget to send admission tickets.

Yoon Kwang Hun’s text message was still characteristically dry.

Even inside the private plane to Brussels, Isaac Stern did not look the least bit tired. The person who was yawning from tiredness was Jun Hyuk.

“Isaac. Isn’t it weird that we’re just going over there when the committee hasn’t asked us yet?”

“The New York Philharmonic’s maestro was certain of it. It’s only a matter of time before they call for you. And you could show them how you solve the biggest problem that the world of contemporary music has. The competition’s end will be anticipating that as well.”

“Problem?”

“Unlike in the past, composers and performers are now completely separated. The composition and conducting departments are separated in college as well. One of the reasons why contemporary music has become farther from people is that there is an analysis that the composer doesn’t perform himself.”

Beethoven played the piano himself while conducting the orchestra, and Mozart did everything to conducting opera music. In modern day however, music has become completely separated like an industry.

“But you’ve already done it once before. Didn’t you conduct Inferno yourself to record it? There will be a symbolic meaning to your conducting your own song.”

He wanted to say more, but they both fell asleep.

Brussels International Airport is a short distance of 12km northeast from the city. However, the limousine with President Stern and Jun Hyuk did not go into the city.

“Isaac, where are we going right now? Aren’t we going to Brussels?”

“I thought somewhere quieter than the city would be better, so I borrowed a castle. It’s a 20 minute distance from the city, so it won’t be uncomfortable to go back and forth.”

“What? Castle? Isaac! Geez! Let’s just go to a normal hotel. It’s totally obvious that you want a huge castle to throw those parties you like so much every day.”

It is something that Jun Hyuk realized while seeing Isaac Stern over the past few months. He is very serious and refined when he is dealing with music, showing features of an old gentleman. His personal side is humorous and shows signs of a playboy who likes to play.

“Party? Me? No. Once I handle the situation with your conducting and the competition committee, I’m going back to New York. I’m a pretty busy person, you know. I can’t just sit back and relax here for months.”

“Then I’ll have to move to a smaller hotel. How am I supposed to spend my time alone in a castle?”

“Trust me this time. It’ll be just to your liking when you see it.”

He winked and laughed. Jun Hyuk did not feel his trust go to him, but thought that he should just trust him this one time.

“What do you think? Isn’t it perfect?”

Jun Hyuk stared blankly at the castle as the scenery stole his mind.

“This is a castle? Ah, it is great. But to be called a castle, it’s a bit.....”

“It was normally a bit bigger than this. It was still a small castle, not to the scale of England’s Buckingham Palace. That was restored and a small house was created. They just call it a castle out of habit.”

More than a castle, it is closer to a beautiful mansion in the countryside. The house’s position on a low hill showed that it used to be a castle, and it is a secluded area as if there is a park around it. It is a peaceful place where a few birds flew around the small lake.

“I know your taste well now. Somewhere nothing is around. People, cities. It’ll be quiet.”

Isaac Stern saw Jun Hyuk’s pleased face and got back in the limousine.

“Then get some rest. I’m going to go meet someone from the competition committee.”

Isaac Stern had only slept a few hours on the plane, but he did not seem tired at all. Where is that vigor coming from? Jun Hyuk threw his bags into the living room. He could not leave this beautiful scenery and fall asleep, so he slowly took a walk around the empty hill.

Chapter 189

The chairman of the competition committee and President Stern were having beer and pizza for lunch.

“We’re using the scores you sent over, well.”

“Wasn’t the timing appropriate?”

“Ha ha. You’re still the same. I guess you asked to see me so quickly because you have something to discuss?”

“I think you can already guess what that is. Is that not right?”

The chairman took a bite of his pizza, a sip of his beer, and examined Isaac Stern’s expression. He knows that it is President Stern’s personality to make what he wants happen. There will be an employee of the committee who acts as his informant so that he knows exactly what is going on with the competition. His coming to meet him as the chairman meant that he wants to get a definitive answer anyway.

“If you’re talking about Jun’s conducting, we are keeping it in mind. We haven’t had such a case until now, but since the composer was already the visiting conductor of the Boston Philharmonic, there won’t be an argument.”

“He won’t be missing as a hot topic either. Isn’t he the composer of Inferno?”

“We are already thinking of that as well. Mr. Stern, I see you want to put Jun on the stage no matter what.”

“It’s because I don’t think there’s anything comparable to having this be his debut as a conductor. And it’ll be meaningful for him to premiere his own song.”

Stern took a sip of beer and said what he wants without hesitation. With his personality, he cannot just sit back and wait with an uncertain statement that they are keeping it in mind.

“If the situation is where Jun cannot conduct, he will not attend the awards ceremony.

An employee from Stern Corporation will accept the award on his behalf.”

“That’s a bit harsh. He needs to discuss the work with the finalists, and the composer must tell us his views.”

The chairman slammed his glass of beer down. Sending someone else to accept the award means lowering the value of the award.

“I have full faith in Jun as a composer. The thought is that the score is the performer’s once it has left his hands. We just look at how the performer interprets it. I will respect Jun’s opinion as his manager.”

He is not wrong. It is a preferred way of thinking to the pretentious composers who interfere with performers. The chairman could not think of anything to say in response.

“The only time Jun stands on stage in Palais des Beaux-arts will be when he is conducting.”

Winners of the Queen Elisabeth Competition must attend a feast with an invitation from Queen Fabiola of Belgium. If Jun Hyuk does not attend that, he will be leaving a flaw that cannot be washed away.

“There are 6 finalists with piano and violin. If you do the final performance with a choral concerto, you’ll need 6 performances. Our committee is planning on having 2 per day, for a total of 3 days of finals.”

It has not yet been confirmed, but the chairman came clean with what he wants and what the competition supporters want. As long as it has become a reality, nothing bad will come of telling him in advance.

“Piano and violin? Then you’re not thinking of putting the vocals in with the final song?”

“No. We looked over it several times and the art director is also in opposition. The tenor stands out too much. It’s not fair. We will think about having the winners do special appearances though.”

Isaac Stern nodded in understanding.

“So what do you think about asking the composer Jun to do 3 performances?”

“If you say 3, you mean for him to alternate conducting with Maestro Pierre Boulez?”

“Yes. One day each. They’ll stand on stage together on the last day.”

‘He’s really trying to get as much out of this as he can. What a drag.’

Isaac Stern was having a difficult time trying to hold back his laughter. Isn’t this basically comparing the conducting of two men?

He must have come up with such a plan with the thought that it would become incredible news. It is something that not even Stern himself thought of.

“Alright. Then the Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra takes the main performance and the Belgium National Orchestra takes the final performance. Jun conducts 3 times in the finals. Is that right?”

“Yes. Practice will be twice a week. Until March. If possible, we’d like to start next week.”

“Alright. We’ll prepare so there will be no disruptions. We request that the orchestra members know the score completely by next week.”

While Isaac Stern was returning to the castle, he thought that he had done everything he needed to in Brussels. All he has left to do is stay for 2 or 3 days to show Jun Hyuk a fun time.



Jun Hyuk spent 3 days with Isaac Stern. They did not just go to Brussels, but also Brugge, a 100km away and retaining a medieval atmosphere.

In Brugge, there is an old town that has been named a UNESCO World Heritage site. It is so beautiful that it is called the “Venice of the North” and it is a place where tradition lives. There is also beer to that standard, created with an old know-how.

Jun Hyuk spent a few days enjoying beer and getting drunk with Isaac Stern, the pleasant old man.

“Jun. I’m going back to New York tonight. Practices start next week, so rest comfortably until then. Oh right. Someone else is coming tomorrow or the day after. This person will take care of you, so just say whatever you need.”

As soon as President Stern went back to New York, Jun Hyuk spent his days quietly with a maid from Eastern Europe.

There were no people in the area, so all he could hear were the winter wind and birds. The weather was warm even though it is winter so the lake did not freeze over, but it rained often. It is not a freezing winter but a chilly one.

Sunday morning before his first meeting with the Belgium National Orchestra, he heard a knock on his door as he was about to get up to get dressed. He opened the door thinking that it would be the maid telling him to come eat breakfast, but he saw another familiar face.

“Good morning, Maestro. Come have breakfast.”

In front of the door, Tara Butters from Boston was smiling as though they had seen each other yesterday.

“Tara! What are you doing here? Are you the secretary that Isaac mentioned?”

His eyes were wide in surprise and Tara stopped smiling to speak,

“Yes. Do I make you uncomfortable?”

“Oh, no. I actually wished for someone like you when Isaac spoke about a secretary. I didn’t think we’d meet like this again.”

Tara’s face brightened with Jun Hyuk’s honesty.

Tara Butters met a lot of conductors while assisting maestros, and she has never been impressed. Jun Hyuk on the other hand, is a shockingly phenomenal conductor and she could feel that he really needs an assistant from his extrovert personality.

When Tara heard that Jun Hyuk had signed with Stern Corporation, she applied to be his secretary and interviewed with President Stern.

She had won over President Stern’s favor in the interview when she said that she

‘wants to see a miracle’. In addition, President Stern had not hesitated to hire her because of her foreign language proficiency, a necessity in dealing with conductors from countries all over the world. Her reputation in the industry also played a role in her hire.

Tara took Jun Hyuk by the wrist and dragged him.

“Let’s go. We’ll talk over breakfast.”

Jun Hyuk sat across the table from Tara and spoke,

“Tara.”

“Yes, Maestro.”

“There are 2 things I want right now. Take of those for me first.”

“Yes, of course.”

Tara was about to take out her notebook when Jun Hyuk waved his hand.

“You won’t need to make note of it. You’ll need to do it now. First, tell the maid that she can just make breakfast and come back for dinner. And tell her that she won’t need to come at all on days when I have rehearsals starting next week. I’ll just eat at a restaurant before coming in since I’ll be in the city anyway.”

“Alright. And the second?”

“Call me Jun from now on. Speak to me more comfortably. And stop saying maestro and sir when you speak to me.”

“But...”

“Stop. If you can’t do it, go back to Boston. What’s there to do if I’m uncomfortable?”

Tara looked at Jun Hyuk’s frowning face and laughed lightly.

“Okay. I’ll call you Jun from now on.”

Tara got up from the table and spoke with the maid in French for a moment. The maid’s

face brightened as she said ‘merci’ to Jun Hyuk and packed her bag to leave.

“Whew. Now I can finally relax and eat.”

Jun Hyuk felt relieved now that the maid who had been standing next to the table to watch him eat, had gone.

“Jun, do you know why President Stern hired me as your assistant?”

Tara was eating a piece of cheese and she seemed to be as relaxed as the tone had become more comfortable.

“Because you’re competent?”

“That’s not what I mean... It means that you’re going to have to handle a really packed schedule. I heard that you have a performance with the New York Philharmonic once the competition is over. You’ll have less and less personal time.”

“I know about the performance with the New York Philharmonic, but do I already have a schedule after that?”

“Not yet. But if the performance is successful, I’m sure you’ll become busy.”

“And that’s why he hired you?”

“Yeah.”

Jun Hyuk had not experienced a schedule full of performances every single day. It did not look so bad.

“One part of my job is to figure out when you need to stop.”

“When I need to stop? Don’t become a workaholic?”

“Bingo.”

Tara took the fork out of her mouth and tapped her plate with it.

“The competition will probably be the last time you have any free time. You’ll only have to work twice a week. If there’s anything you want to do in this time, let me know.”

There had not been a time that he had spent with free time until now. He was always writing songs and working on them. It is just that the kinds of work changes for Jun Hyuk.

He finished his meal and Tara held a CD out to him.

“It’ll be good for you to hear this.”

“What is this?”

“Belgium National Orchestra concert album. It’s the latest one, so it’ll be able to check the orchestra’s color and the sound of the large hall in BOZAR. I’m sure it’ll be good to hear it before the meeting tomorrow?”

Jun Hyuk held a thumbs up to Tara. She really has no flaws.

Tara went for a walk in the area with Jun Hyuk, and told him about the people he would be meeting the next day.

“Jun, the looks you get might not be very nice.”

“Why not?”

“Because you made a tremendous contribution to the development of contemporary music. Choral Concerto is the complete opposite. They’ll also be a bit ill-tempered because they need to give you a part of the conducting.”

The head of the Belgium National Orchestra, Pierre Boulez, is a Swiss conductor and music theorist. He is such a devotee to contemporary music that he is called a ‘revolutionary who struggles with the past’.

“Okay. I guess I’ll have to avoid conflict as much as possible.”

“And who knows. Since you are the composer of Inferno. Anyway, don’t mind it too much.”

He has yet another person to nag at him now, but he could feel a warm sense of caring.

Chapter 190

“Maestro. Welcome to BOZAR.”

When Jun Hyuk and Tara arrived at the grand theater of BOZAR, an employee escorted them to the competition committee office. Once they exchanged greetings with the committee chairman and members and came out, Tara was laughing.

“Why are you laughing?”

“Because of those people. This is... They look like they’ve hit jackpot.”

“Jackpot?”

“Yeah. It’s hard to maintain a competition without sponsors. Something like Queen Elisabeth has a lot of sponsors, but they’ll be tight on funds. But this time, they have you, the hot topic these days. Europe’s cable channels, internet broadcasting. They’ll have more sponsors coming in. They’ll be free from funding constraints.”

“It’s money wherever you go.”

“The Chicago Ballet Company was dismissed because it couldn’t come up with \$200,000. Even though the top ballerina’s salary was \$1 million. When that ballet company went under, the top ballerina went to a ballet company in L.A. for a salary of \$500,000. Classical music is suffering from the ails of organizations going under while stars become richer.”

Jun Hyuk listened to Tara and hurried to meet the head leading the Belgium National Orchestra.

“Welcome, Maestro Jun.”

“Hello, Maestro Boulez.”

Contrary to Tara’s worries, Pierre Boulez welcomed him with sincerity.

“I regretted not having been able to see you in Salzburg due to conflicting schedules,

but it's an honor to get to meet you like this. Really."

"No. I'm more....."

"There are a lot of things I want to ask you, but let's talk over time. Shouldn't we put out the urgent fires first?"

It was apparent that he was rushing the day, whether it is due to his personality or because the day really is busy.

"Yes."

"The orchestra has been configured of 112 people. I think this is enough to perform your choral concerto. What do you think?"

Jun Hyuk matched up the Belgium National Orchestra's performance he heard yesterday with the organization of 112 instruments.

"Thinking about the BOZAR grand hall, don't you think it'd be better to reduce it? By taking the sound stability into account."

Pierre Boulez's eyes sparked. Is it because of his experience with the Boston Philharmonic? It is not easy for a rookie to think all the way to the theater's scale.

"I think under 100 would be perfect. Aren't there 2,200 seats in Henry le Boeuf?"

Even the Sejong Center for Performing Arts has over 3,000 seats. Henry le Boeuf however is an old historical building and is $\frac{2}{3}$ of the size, though it may have been of a large scale at the time.

"You haven't seen inside the theater yet. The ceilings are high. It can easily take up to 112 people."

Jun Hyuk thought of an appropriate tone when he heard the CD yesterday, but he did not nitpick any further. He did not want to argue over subtle differences.

"Ah, I see. Good. I'm sure you know the sound state of the hall."

"Thanks. The choir is currently looking, but they're thinking of 150 people? What do you think?"

“I’ll follow your thoughts on that as well.”

Pierre Boulez looked at Jun Hyuk for a moment and smiled.

“You’re exactly as the rumors said.”

“Excuse me?”

“I heard that your ability to bring out the best is outstanding, so you don’t really pay much attention to the details.”

“I’m like that because there’s still a lot that I don’t know, rather than having the ability.”

Even a disproportionate modesty. Pierre Boulez held back his laugh.

“Then can you tell me your view on the choral concerto?”

“Everything is in the score, including my views.”

Pierre Boulez’s face hardened a bit at Jun Hyuk’s unexpected answer.

“Interpretation is up to the performer?”

“Yes. That’s what I think.”

“Even if I take your song apart completely and interpret it in a new way?”

“Isn’t it another happiness of music to see another interpretation from you?”

“What? Ha ha. Well, I’ve taken a hit.”

When he first heard what Jun Hyuk said, he had thought that he might be competing with him. Once he saw that Jun Hyuk just wanted to see his music with different appearances, he saw Jun Hyuk in a new light in the way he thinks like a great.

“Very good. Then I won’t ever look at your rehearsal. Don’t watch mine either. Let’s see how different our interpretations are. Isn’t that part of the fun?”

“Yes. That is the fun. Ha ha.”

Even with the same score, orchestra, and instruments, there are many cases where the music is entirely different just because the conductors, or performers are different.

When Impressionist painter Monet was young, he drew a sunset landscape with 3 colleagues. They were given the condition that they need to draw as realistically as possible and drew the same scene, but the 4 completed paintings were completely different.

Like this, objects are always different with the way different people interpret them. Pierre Boulez's heart beat when he thought of how the 2 versions of the choral concerto would ring out on the same stage.

"Then shall we meet the orchestra first?"

Pierre Boulez rose from his seat and led Jun Hyuk to the theater.

"Oh right. Don't be too surprised with the way the orchestra reacts."

"What? What does that mean?"

"There are quite a few people who hate you. Including me. Ha ha."

Jun Hyuk followed Pierre Boulez in puzzlement at this statement that was difficult to understand. When they went through the passage for personnel and entered the stage, the orchestra members jumped up from their seats when they saw Jun Hyuk and the maestro.

"We have finally met. This is Maestro Jun, who you have all been waiting for."

Jun Hyuk bowed to the orchestra and they burst out in passionate applause. It is a hearty welcome, far from the hate that Pierre Boulez mentioned.

"What do you think? You were expecting a fearsome demon, but this handsome young man has appeared. On top of that, he's worn a Beethoven mask this time. Ha ha."

The Belgium National Orchestra constantly worked hard to succeed in playing Inferno with Pierre Boulez, a devotee to contemporary music. They had thought that it would be possible to perform since the album came out, but they ended up giving up.

Pierre Boulez had listened to the album and declared that they would be giving up. He

admitted that he could not express the dim light of hope, and the orchestra had accepted it as well.

The hate that Pierre Boulez had talked about is their respect for the wall Jun Hyuk had created that they cannot get over.

“Isn’t today just to exchange greetings? You’re on Tuesdays and Thursdays?”

“Yes. Then I’ll go back now so I don’t take anymore of your time.”

“Wait. Are you really just going to go back? I heard that you showed tremendous magic in Boston.”

It was uncertain whether or not he was joking, but the orchestra members’ eyes looked like that of cats who are asking for snacks.

However, snacks are only given in training as rewards. Jun Hyuk laughed as he spoke,

“My powers are at their end right now. I’ll recharge today and show you tomorrow.”

Jun Hyuk left the orchestra behind him and left the theater.

“How was it? Your first meeting?”

“Hm... Even someone who loves Schoenberg can’t dislike Beethoven. They’re very benevolent.”

Arnold Schoenberg is the most influential composer of the first half of the 20th century. He is one of the people who put a stop to the major and minor base, and established the 12 tone technique.

Even those who love Schoenberg’s atonal music will cry from the emotion they feel from listening to Beethoven’s piano sonata.

Tara let out a sigh of relief. She had worried for no reason. They are also musicians who live for Mozart and Beethoven’s music.



The orchestra members were excited for their first rehearsal for Choral Concerto. It had been a while since they had performed on such a large scale, and it had been a while since they had performed a masterpiece that went over 70 minutes. They need to perform alternating between 2 conductors a song that does not have pauses and is so full that just by looking at the score, they can tell that there is not even space for a needle to fit in. They were also anticipating the comparison between the 2 conductors.

The conductor of the first rehearsal is the composer, Jun Hyuk. The members all looked to Jun Hyuk standing on the podium. They were anticipating what his first words would be.

“With the performance ahead of us, just keep 2 things in mind. The first is to completely forget Beethoven’s Choral Symphony. It is a completely different song. If you perform this without being able to shake off the feeling of the Choral Symphony, you won’t even be able to complete the 1st movement.”

He said that they would not be able to do it, but it is the conductor’s meaning that he would not tolerate it. Jun Hyuk needs to embed in them that just as it cannot be said that a hippopotamus and water buffalo are the same animal just because they have the same weight, the songs are not the same because they have the same length and configuration.

“The second is the feeling that you must not forget for a second while you perform.”

Jun Hyuk wanted to explain to the orchestra exactly the feeling he wrote the song with. He thought for a moment because he could not explain it clearly without the words. Then he thought of the moment that any European would understand precisely.

“Think about the FIFA World Cup finals. Germany... no... Belgium and Brazil met in the finals. The winner is the winner of the World Cup.”

Since they are all performers who have gathered on soccer’s continent, Europe, the way they are looking at Jun Hyuk became different. Furthermore, half of them are Belgian. It is a situation that they can understand completely.

“The score is 2:2 until the second half. It is now overtime. Though it doesn’t exist now, let’s say that we are following the golden goal rule. The national players exert their

superhuman strength and patience to run the ground. Constant passes, shooting. They are running and running just to score that one goal. The crowd prays earnestly. And 5 minutes later, there's a goal."

The orchestra members have already experienced games like this several times, so they could understand it easily.

"The feeling of the crowd that had to watch this anxiously for 5 minutes. I'm sure you understand well? We need to maintain that feeling for 70 minutes. The last verse of the chorus in the 4th movement is the explosive applause that comes from the goal."

The orchestra murmured. They do not even need to go all the way to the World Cup. How many games of 90 minutes and not 5 minutes had they watched in anxiety?

The orchestra could understand Jun Hyuk's direction for conducting.

"70 minutes of performing felt like it had gone by in 5 minutes. It is a success if it receives this kind of review."

Jun Hyuk picked up the baton and the orchestra members looked at their scores, waiting for the signal. The first movement of the baton was the whistle that starts the game. The vehement overtime of the World Cup finals started.

Chapter 191

“I don’t think that Jun composed this choral concerto.”

Pierre Boulez spoke in affirmation. The orchestra members’ eyes grew wide when they heard the maestro say something negative about the composer.

“I’m sure that the modern day Beethoven wrote this choral concerto.”

“Modern day Beethoven?”

The bandmaster repeated it, asking for an exact meaning.

“Yes. If Beethoven had been born now with the same musicality, how would Beethoven of the past be different from Beethoven now? Body? Health? Personality? Fortune? I’m sure there’s nothing that could be guaranteed.”

Pierre Boulez looked at the orchestra and portrayed Beethoven as if he were in front of him.

“I think that the one thing that we can be sure of is the difference in thinking. He would have had a much more diverse amount of thoughts and the depth of his knowledge would have been different. He would have had many different cultural experiences, not just those limited to Europe. But the kind of music that he sought out wouldn’t have changed.”

He listed the differences as though he were comparing and analyzing two Beethovens standing in front of him.

“Which means, a Beethoven with a bit more complex thought. Due to this, don’t you think that he would have changed the Choral Symphony of the past to the Choral Concerto now with a free expression?”

His conclusion is that of a free Beethoven instead of a strict one.

“The focus of the performance is that it is more grand and free-spirited, but still retaining the elegance of Beethoven.”

The two maestros' demands were not complete opposites, but they were not adjacent to each other either. The orchestra thought that they would have a good time preparing for the finals with these two maestros.



“Maestro, won’t the orchestra members be confused? Their expressions these days during rehearsals is weird. It kind of looks like they’re laughing but it also looks like they’re frowning.”

“Ha ha. It’s okay. Our Belgium National Orchestra is a pretty good instrument. They can bring out a conductor’s request well. It’s just because they’re not in the habit yet. Give them 2 weeks and they’ll be performing both versions as if it’s nothing.”

Jun Hyuk enjoyed conducting. It is not like with Inferno when it was as though he was forcing a building while looking at impossible plans. Now, he has a perfect building plan and is piling the bricks to steadily create a magnificent cathedral. There is fun in seeing the cathedral take shape step by step.

While Jun Hyuk was enjoying conducting, the orchestra members were full of regret. They had heard the rumors. They heard that he showed the Boston Philharmonic a mysterious side of him full of brilliant ideas and music.

The Jun Hyuk they see however is like every other conductor, and they cannot find anything new in him. The orchestra members even joked around saying that he might be a magician who already used all of his powers.

When they started to get used to the two versions of Choral Concerto, the jokes starting to change. Jun Hyuk went from a magician who used all of his power to the Grim Reaper. Instead of a scythe, he is holding a baton.

He does not miss a single mistake with his scary listening skills, and does not hesitate to make them play repeatedly until the feeling and sound that he wants comes out. When he was realizing that the Belgium National Orchestra is not at the level to reach his aim, Pierre Boulez was changing.

The relaxed state he had shown until now had disappeared. They started tightening their grips on the orchestra as though two conductors in competition even though their methods were carried out in completely different languages.



“Tempo! Faster. Marcato! Break up each sound by the bow’s movement and string them together. This part isn’t a long pass. You’re making short passes up to the front of the goal. Don’t forget this feeling. Again!”



“Calando! (making the tempo and strength slower and weaker) Smoother. Make the feelings continue as though they might be disconnected. The intellectual pleasure Beethoven feels as he keeps learning new culture. That pleasure is continued endlessly. Again!”



“Fortissimo! Bring out a more vehement sound. The audience already shows a crazy reaction with the first drum sounds of a rock band. The timpani needs to be to a point where it is hitting the audience’s hearts. As soon as the timpani sound rings out, the brass instruments need to follow and hit the audience’s ears.”



“Voce Piena! (full of sound) You cannot lose dignity. It is not the sound of the timpani ringing through the audience, but as though it is a wave from the back of the audience. You cannot lose the elegance for even a moment. We cannot say that Beethoven’s tenacity is very good, but his music is elegance itself.”



“Don’t think about the piano or violin ensembles. I’ll control them. You should all just follow the baton. The soloists need to be pulled in by our storm-like vehemence. I have absolutely no intention on bringing them along. Our performance needs to keep going with the thought that we’ll toss anyone who falls behind.”



“You need to think about the piano and violin ensembles as well. Their music becomes

a part of us starting in the 2nd movement. We need to wrap them, but it is a bit rough right now. Play more smoothly like a mother's touch, carefully embracing her child."



The members of the Belgium National Orchestra were about to go out of their minds because they were switching off every day to play completely opposite performances. It almost felt like they were going back and forth switching 2 buttons on and off. One is 'vehemence' and the other is 'elegance'.

No one expressed their discontent though. An instrument only brings out the sound that the performer desires, no matter how the performer changes. They have pride that they are an already completed large luxurious instrument.

Their pride will come crashing down the moment they voice their complaints. The only time they can complain is when they meet a performer who cannot handle the orchestra as an instrument. The two people who are handling them now are two excellent conductors, maestros.

It was a bit later than Pierre Boulez had been expecting, but the orchestra became used to the switch in the new year, at the end of January. It was as though the two maestros were conducting separate orchestras.

"What do you think, Jun? Has the orchestra gotten used to your conducting?"

"Yes. I'm sure they've gotten used to you as well, Maestro."

Pierre Boulez smiled in satisfaction. He had overheard the orchestra members saying that they could feel a clear distinction between a hot-blooded youth and a relaxed elderly.

Since it is his orchestra that has overcome this difference, he even felt proud of them.

"But Maestro, there is something I'm concerned about... Isn't this a competition and not a concert? Do you think it'll be okay when the judges need to evaluate the violin and piano finalists?"

"Isn't that something those people need to do? There's no reason for us to worry about it. And effort, skill, and talent are bound to show themselves in any environment. A

person is qualified to be a judge if he can catch those moments.”

Pierre Boulez did not seem to be worrying too much about the competition. It even seemed like he was enjoying the situation.

“It’ll actually be a bit difficult to judge. I’m sure it’ll be part of the fun to watch the judges’ uncomfortable expressions. Ha ha.”

Belgium’s maestro seemed to be considering the competition as a concert.

“The problem is the finalists. Being paired with a conductor who fits their style will become a key component to winning.”

Chapter 192

Once it became February, Jun Hyuk seemed much more relaxed. Even until January, he had always been brooding in thought. It was hard to talk to him at home, so Tara only watched over him while taking care of his going back and forth between the house and theater.

When that period ended, he joked around and hung out with the orchestra to drink beers after rehearsals.

“I guess you’re satisfied now? You seem much more relaxed.”

“Yeah. All that’s left is getting used to it. Time will solve that. Honestly, I was really surprised. I even think it’s weird that an orchestra with such skilled members has so few albums out.”

“It’ll be because of their repertoire. They mostly do contemporary or experimental music. There aren’t record labels that’ll get involved to release albums that won’t sell.”

There is another reason why the Belgium National Orchestra chooses new music for its repertoire rather than famous songs. They are neighboring Vienna and Berlin. Italy, the home of opera, is not very far either.

It is also a choice to show Belgium’s colors instead of choosing the same repertoire as everyone else and being overshadowed by them.

“The choir is going to join in March. Is that okay? Isn’t it a bit late?”

Tara saw Jun Hyuk in a more relaxed state and came up with a good idea.

“No. The choir is practicing separately with their own conductor. The important thing is the vocal soloist. The choir can practice properly once they have the soloist as well. That part does make me a little nervous because the soloist isn’t decided until the beginning of April.”

“Then that means you have some time until March?”

Tara had a playful look.

“Yeah. Why?”

Just in case you start working on new songs because you have free time. I’m going to stop you.”

“Will it work to try to stop me?”

Composition happens in his head. Not even Tara can nag about what goes on in his mind.

“Since rehearsals are Tuesday and Thursday, let’s rest a bit from Friday to Monday. I’ll make plans, so you just follow.”

“What plans?”

“Leave it to me. You’ll love it.”

Tara’s plans were not very special, but she had very carefully paid attention to the details to create a schedule that would allow Jun Hyuk to see new things.

International high-speed rail Thalys is a very convenient transportation network that connects France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. As it is a high speed rail that makes the trip from Brussels, Belgium to Paris, France in an hour and a half, they were able to go to most places in 4 days and 3 nights.

Tara took Jun Hyuk to galleries and museums all over Europe to discover works. They also went to clubs and cafes with talented youths who have yet to be discovered, so that Jun Hyuk could be around people his age.

Jun Hyuk enjoyed spending time with young artists, but he did not show as much interest in art as Tara thought he would. Tara thought that Jun Hyuk would be shocked and moved the moment he laid eyes on a masterpiece. Isn’t he the person with such delicate emotions that he even listens to the sound of a single water drop?

She realized that he would not have exceptional talent in all aspects just because he is a genius artist. Jun Hyuk saw the art exhibitions in museums, but he mostly just blinked at them. Fortunately, he did seem to understand Tara’s detailed explanations, but the color was still just paint and the background canvas.

There were the rare works that he looked at for a long time. Tara tried to find what the pieces Jun Hyuk held interest in had in common, but it was so inconsistent that she could not figure it out.

“Why? Do you like this?”

“Yeah. I think it’s more amazing the more I look at it.”

“In what aspect?”

“I don’t know. It’s hard to explain.”

“Then do you want to buy it? You can leave it in your room and continue to enjoy it. This is a new artist’s work, so it isn’t even that expensive.”

Thinking of the money that Jun Hyuk has made, he would be able to buy a painting for tens of thousands of dollars.

“No. It’s enough to just see it once. Is there a need to have it to keep looking at?”

It is what people without interest in art say. But there will come the time when he sees a painting that he wants to keep with him. That moment is when his eyes are opened to paintings.

All he needs is to meet that one piece. With a moment of realization, as soon as he meets the piece his head will go blank and he will be lost in it without a sense for time. After that, his vision for paintings will be completely different.

Tara was excited just thinking about how his music would change once he met such a piece.

“Jun, if you ever find a piece that you want, tell me. I’ll get it for you.”



There was something good in the traveling every week. Whenever he visited the maestros he met in Salzburg in their regions, he would reunite with them.

The maestros were as welcoming as always, and made a fuss to see the score as soon

as they heard that he had won the Queen Elisabeth Competition.

Berlin Philharmonic's current standing conductor, Sarill Petrenko, laughed for a while after hearing that Jun Hyuk had won the competition.

"What is it? I'm sure you didn't submit something like Inferno. Will the piano and violin finalists be trembling without being able to play?"

"No. This time, it's a song flowing with the classical. Even you'll be interested when you see it."

"I'm fascinated by all of your pieces. I'm just waiting for the day you release all of the songs you made until now."

Tara shivered a little as she was listening from the side. If Jun Hyuk reveals all of his songs? No – If they could even see it alone before releasing them?



The Queen Elisabeth Competition opened in March and over 300 performance DVDs flew in from all around the world. Unlike previous years, the council received submissions a month earlier and had been advertising since January that the process would be different.

Participants filmed themselves playing or singing in studios and recorded them on DVDs. Each DVD also contained the participants' earnest desire to have a chance to stand on stage.

The judges chose participants who left such strong impressions that they wanted to listen to them in person. The over 90 people who were chosen boarded trains and planes to Brussels, full of happiness and anxiety.

Among them were Laura Goldberg from Juilliard who professors ensured a winner, and Han Ye Ji who was holding Professor Jeon Hye Jin's hand tightly.

Danny, Jun Hyuk's self-designated best friend, also pushed back his tour schedule in Canada and headed to Brussels.

Of the people who passed the preliminary round, only 36 people would be able to

stand on stage again. They did their best to show beyond their best in the few minutes that were allotted to them.

However, the god of music only takes the hands of a select portion of the musicians who hold their hands out to it, coldly shaking off the rest. The 12 people from the piano, violin, and vocal parts who the god of music held the hands of. A total of 36 people went to the main stage. Half of these people would go to the last stage.

The Queen Elisabeth Competition is famous for its unique process of having the finalists stay at Brussels Chapelle Conservatory for 9 days and 8 nights. The finalists call this place where they cannot use the internet or their phones and can only eat, sleep, and practice, as a 'luxury prison'.

The finalists practice one song of choice and one assigned song for 8 days to perform on the 9th day, and a song that they do not know comes out as the assigned song. It is to see how the performers interpret the score and express the music on their own. This year's assigned song is the 2nd place song in the composition part, Marlin Oscar Guggenheim IV's 'World of Europe'.

The 2nd place song has never before been chosen for the assigned song in the finals. Whether it is because the 2nd place song 'World of Europe' is that good or through the power of Austria's Guggenheim family, it became a controversy for the period.

Until now, the winner had been decided on the 9th day of training through a contest. This time however, only the vocals followed this and for the rest, only 6 finalists would be selected. The last winners would be chosen through Jun Hyuk's Choral Concerto.

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Jun Hyuk did not have rehearsals during the week long finals period because the Belgium National Orchestra and Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra take care of the performance. He was able to watch the competition comfortably.

Jun Hyuk could not miss the performances of the 3 welcome faces he saw in the list of participants. The person he had the most anticipation for was Laura Goldberg.

He hoped that she would win in the best conditions no matter what song she sings. She needs to sing the soprano part of the Choral Concerto. He had written the song while thinking of her voice.

Laura Goldberg's assigned song was 17th century French composer Charpentier's Motet. The start and end are difficult in skill, there is a lot of treble while the middle is lyrical, and there is a warm feeling so it is not an easy song in terms of vocals.

If she can handle it perfectly, winning is not a problem. He has a feeling that Laura will win easily.

Jun Hyuk listened to Laura sing and looked puzzled. She is in no way at this level. He even thought that it could be strategy. The strategy of getting through the assigned song with ease and showing as much skill as is desired in the song of choice is obsolete though it always works.

Jun Hyuk broke out a smile as soon as he saw the song she had chosen. Even though it is an obvious strategy, this song is enough to make it work.

The song she chose is so unconventional it made the judges create a fuss. It is contemporary music great Gyorgy Ligeti's 'Mysteries of the Macabre'.

It is not a song that can be handled just by being able to sing well. The changes are so severe that even the audience that is sitting still cannot get themselves together.

It has a difficulty that demands the so-called 'ultrasonic range of dolphins' and incredible acting.

However, Laura Goldberg overwhelmed them like a fountain shooting water high and then falling low. The only mistake she made was that the key was slightly rough where it was to be graceful. She brought about surprise with nearly perfect treble technique, strong focus, and committed acting.

With the audience's standing ovation that lasted for over 10 minutes, they could foresee her win.

As soon as her performance ended, Jun Hyuk left the theater. In the 2 years he had not seen her, Laura Goldberg had become a complete soprano. When he thought of the stage he would have with her, his heart beat faster. He regretted not extending the soprano part of Choral Concerto more.

The first winner of the Queen Elisabeth Competition appeared. As predicted, it was Laura Goldberg of the vocal section.

The judges' evaluations that she has 'a strong personality and excellent tone with huge potential and clear professionalism' and reports in the press of her 'crystal clear voice that crosses between several octaves with ease, excellent expression, solid acting' let everyone know that a new prima donna had appeared.

The 6 winners including Laura Goldberg found out something new during the competition committee's feast. That they had been specially requested for the piano and violin final performances.

None of them were willing to turn down the request in such a happy moment. Everyone readily accepted. Their curiosity for the song grew as they wondered what it was that it required vocals.



Jun Hyuk confirmed the finalists and arranged a dinner to congratulate Danny and Han Ye Ji. Including Professor Jeon Hye Jin, the 3 people were shocked at Jun Hyuk's surprise appearance and looked to be disconcerted, but 2 of them could guess why Jun Hyuk is here. Danny was the only one who continued to look befuddled.

"Jun, why on earth are you here? You even rented out a house."

"Ye Ji, don't you think he's a bit daft? Why else would Jun Hyuk be in Brussels?"

Professor Jeon Hye Jin laughed as she spoke in Korean, and Han Ye Ji spoke,

“Don’t you think the final song is Mr. Jang’s? I haven’t heard once that Mr. Guggenheim’s ‘World of Europe’ is the winning song.”

“Jun, is that true? Your song won?”

Jun Hyuk laughed and nodded. Danny continued to look blank. Professor Jeon only looked at Danny pathetically.

Contrary to his blank expression, Danny had performed incredibly and had become a finalist easily.

‘A performance that provides the experience of pure musical bliss and freedom’

‘A violinist who expressed an abstract feeling as if there are many layers of paint and it is impossible to know what is inside’

‘An impressive performer with excellent fingering virtuosity.’

Danny received high praises like this in the press and is closest to being the winner, but he has now forgotten his happiness and is blank.

“Anyway, congratulations Danny. Ms. Ye Ji, you too. Let’s eat while we talk.”

Danny and Han Ye Ji had spent 9 days locked up to prepare for the competition, so they started salivating when they saw the delicious food that the maid and her friends had made.

“I wanted to let you know beforehand since they’ll be announcing it from the competition’s end tomorrow. So you don’t get surprised for nothing.”

“We really would have been shocked if we found out through the release tomorrow. But how did you think of submitting to the competition?”

Professor Jeon never thought that Jun Hyuk would submit his work to a competition. He is not at a level to compete with other youths, and it certainly does not fit Jun Hyuk’s personality.

Jun Hyuk did not tell them that the start to Choral Concerto was Han Ye Ji’s piano. He

thought that it could create unnecessary misunderstandings.

“President Isaac Stern suggested it. He said that competitions are hard to experience unless you are young.”

“But for you, Mr. Jun, to submit to a competition is still... What are normal people like us supposed to do?”

Han Ye Ji swallowed the food in her mouth and smiled. Although they were speaking in Korean, it was evident from Han Ye Ji’s expression that it is not a serious matter, but Danny still had a hard face as he ate. Jun Hyuk looked over Danny’s expression and spoke carefully,

“Danny. Are you mad because I didn’t tell you that I entered the competition before?”

“Huh? Oh, sorry. No. Why would I be? I know what the competition rules are like.”

“Then what’s with your expression? You’re a strong candidate to win.”

Danny put his fork down and looked at Jun Hyuk,

“Jun, I’m not supposed to ask questions like this but tell me one thing.”

“What? It’s fine, what is it?”

“Your song that won. Is it a piece like Inferno? Really hard contemporary music?”

“What?”

“Honestly, I bought the Inferno album and listened to it... but I couldn’t even listen to 3 minutes and stopped. And that was just once. I couldn’t even think to listen to it again. If the winning song is like that.....”

Danny’s face was full of concern. Professor Jeon and Han Ye Ji were holding their breaths and listening to their conversation. It was not just Danny. Han Ye Ji had not been able to listen to more than a few minutes of Inferno either. Danny’s worrying is not groundless.

“Ha ha. Is that why you’re like that? Don’t worry. It’s completely different. It’s thoroughly in classical style.”

“Really? Whew – What a relief. Okay. That’s all I need to know. No need to say more. I don’t want to create any unnecessary misunderstandings. Ha ha.”

Danny discarded his worries and started eating again with a bright expression. Han Ye Ji’s face had also brightened. If it is a classical song, there is no need to worry beforehand.

“Jun Hyuk. I heard that the finals are going to be conducted in a more complicated way. Is that because of your song?”

“Yes. There is that, but it’ll also be because the committee wants a more exciting competition. But Ms. Ye Ji will have great results. You definitely stood out from the 6 finalists.”

Jun Hyuk briefly told Danny what they were saying. He did not want Danny to have any unnecessary misunderstandings. Danny stopped eating to give Han Ye Ji a thumbs up to acknowledge her piano.

After their small talk about the competition, the 3 people were going back to the hotel when Jun Hyuk let something slip for 2 of them.

“Memorize the score completely.”

They were confused by Jun Hyuk’s sudden words for a moment, but they quickly realized that he was giving them a tip.

Danny hugged Jun Hyuk to express this thanks and Han Ye Ji bowed to him lightly. Now, everything is up to their own efforts.

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“As you were already told, this year’s final stage will be held differently from that of other years. There will be 2 performances per day, for 3 days.”

The competition committee put a box in front of the piano and violin finalists.

“We’ll decide on each of your performance times through a raffle. You’ll already know, but I’ll say it again. I’m sure you don’t think that it’ll be to your advantage to go later? Looking at statistics, there are more mistakes due to pressure when going later. So I hope you don’t hold the day and time you go responsible for your performance. Then let’s go through and each pick one.”

The 12 finalists put their trembling hands inside the box and picked out a piece of paper each.

Danny felt his heart beat faster as he unfolded the paper. The performance he chose in the first day, 2nd stage.

“I’m sure you’ve all checked your performance times?”

An employee of the committee checked each paper, recorded the order of performance, copied it, and handed it out to everyone.

“Now, I’ll tell you about the final song. Concerto for Violin and Piano in D Minor. It is the song that won the composition section and it is a double concerto.”

They started murmuring when they heard that it is a double concerto.

“The people who have the same performance times will be on stage together. Check who you will be performing with.”

Danny’s jaw dropped when he saw who he would be performing with.

“So we meet again. To think that we’re in the same performance. Let’s do well together.”

Han Ye Ji held her hand out to Danny.

“Wow. How could this happen! I’m lucky since I get to perform with the best pianist. Ha ha.”

While everyone was busy finding the person they would be performing with, the committee let them know the last important aspect.

“This is the last thing we have to tell you. The orchestra you will be performing with is the Belgium National Orchestra. And 2 people will be dividing up the conducting. One person is someone you know well, Maestro Pierre Boulez. The other person is the winning composer. He’s better known as Jun, the composer of Inferno.”

As soon as he said Inferno, the murmuring grew louder than it had been before. There were even people whose faces had turned white. They were probably remembering Inferno. There was even someone who cursed without thinking.

No matter how famous Jun Hyuk had become through Inferno, there was no comparing careers. And even if he is the composer, they thought that there is a large gap between him and Maestro Pierre Boulez.

The committee member rose both of his hands to silence the murmuring.

“If you think that it is a disadvantage to be paired with the young composer as your conductor, that is a big mistake. We can say it with the competition’s honor on the line. It is impossible to distinguish between whose conducting is superior and inferior. The only difference is in their interpretations of the song.”

Even though the committee was assuring them, there remained people with looks of distrust. These people did not see how the committee members were looking at them pathetically. Those who do not realize that it takes their own skill to survive in a fierce competition can never win.

“The first performances of the first and last days are Maestro Jun. The second day and last performance are Maestro Pierre Boulez.”

Han Ye Ji and Danny met eyes. Danny was especially happier. The day had finally come for him and Jun Hyuk to stand on a formal stage.

“Then do we have to go back to Chapelle Prison – no – Conservatory?”

Someone raised his hand and asked.

“Of course. You will go in turn in considering fairness. Keeping the performance schedule in mind, you can start going in tomorrow in intervals. You will receive the score at Chapelle Conservatory. You will also be informed on the details of your schedules once you are at the conservatory.



The BOZAR great hall was also full of reporters. The release yesterday of the winning composer being the composer of Inferno is the competition’s biggest scoop.

“Tara. Since it’s a joint press conference, don’t you think I could just slip out? Maestro Boulez is there.”

“This is the interview for the composition section. Maestro Boulez will only be discussing the final performance. And don’t worry too much. These reporters are all specialized in music. They don’t ask about gossip topics. Anyone who asks something personal or gossip related won’t be able to enter the competition starting tomorrow.”

Tara pushed Jun Hyuk into the press conference room. When the committee released the information that Jun Hyuk is the winner of the composition section, the media predicted that this would become the biggest news in the world of music this year.

The committee had expected this kind of reaction and prepared a joint press conference to hold before the fever dies down. The Chairman of the competition committee introduced Jun Hyuk after a long greeting.

“Boston Symphony visiting conductor, Inferno’s composer. I’d like to introduce the winner of the Queen Elisabeth Competition, Jun.”

When Jun Hyuk got up from his seat to greet everyone, the reporters’ flashes started going off.

“The title isn’t Choral Concerto. I heard that it is similar to Beethoven’s Choral Symphony. Is this true?”

The first question is provocative from the start.

“It is true that I wrote it with Choral Symphony in mind, but they are not similar.”

Jun Hyuk responded calmly to the question because he had already been expecting it. From the way they are talking about the rumors, it seems the committee has leaked some information.

“Then can you explain the difference between the two songs?”

“Wait a little for the answer to that question. I will explain it precisely on the final stage with music.”

There is nothing to do but hear the difference in music. No matter how it is explained in words, it is difficult to understand until it is heard. The reporter who asked tried to ask another question, but the reporters did not stay still.

“Please explain in detail what you mean when you say that you kept Beethoven in mind when you were composing. Did you keep Beethoven in mind as a composer? Or do you mean that you kept Choral Symphony in mind?”

“It is both.”

“Excuse me? Does that mean that you were comparing Beethoven and yourself?”

“Comparisons aren’t done by the subjects, but by an objective third person. I’m sure someone will compare us when the performance starts and the song is revealed.”

As soon as Jun Hyuk responded, Tara clenched her fists. It is a great response.

“Then I’ll ask again. What do you think when you compare your music to Beethoven’s? From the perspective of an objective musician.”

The question is asking him what he thinks of his song in comparison to Beethoven’s, not asking him to compare himself to Beethoven the person. It is asking him to compare the songs as a composer, but it is also asking about his ability as a composer. They used different words, but all of the reporters wanted to hear the same answer.

“Hm... The piano sonata can’t follow Beethoven and the orchestral song is within a range to catch up.”

Tara collapsed to the ground before she could even feel the strength relax from her clenched fists.

The room fell into a mess when the cameras flashed like fireworks and the reporters started asking questions without a thought to others. A few music reporters cursed and left the conference room.

The committee chairman on stage was trying his best to abate the confusion, while Maestro Pierre Boulez was looking at Jun Hyuk in shock.

Jun Hyuk's response meant that he is plenty capable of creating a song like Beethoven's.

This press conference is being aired live on a cable channel and on the internet. This is the moment where Jun Hyuk turned lovers of classical music all over the world into his enemies.

Chapter 195

While Jun Hyuk was making the explosive statement in BOZAR theater, Danny and Han Ye Ji were looking over the score and complaining.

There are 2 volumes to the score they received from Chapelle Conservatory. One is a full score with the entire song and the other has each of their parts.

When Danny and Han Ye Ji saw the thickness, they realized that it is a large song. As soon as they went into the practice room assigned to them, they opened the score without speaking.

“Jun, this crazy kid. Beethoven... And a chorus on top of that!”

“Ugh. This is too much. How are we supposed to do this within 10 days?”

After almost 4 hours, they both closed their scores and grumbled. Fortunately, they could not understand each other because Danny spoke in French and Han Ye Ji spoke in Korean.

They had complained without realizing it, but they just looked at each other and smiled awkwardly.

“Mister...”

“Hang on. Just call me Danny. Aren’t we partners who will have to perform together? I think we need to be frank at least, so let’s not be so formal.”

“Shall we? Then you can just call me Ashley. It’s my English nickname.”

“Okay, Ashley.”

Danny winked and laughed. When Ashley saw Danny’s pleasant personality, she became a bit more at ease. It is a relief that the partner she will have to spend a long amount of time with is not dreary or single-minded.

“But is this song a challenge to Beethoven’s Choral Symphony? Or is it a tribute song?”

“Of course it’s a challenge. If it’s to the point that Jun is revealing it to the world – and through a competition at that – it means that he’s really satisfied with it... If it were just a simple tribute song, he’s not one to reveal it in a competition.”

There is another reason why Danny is so sure that it is a challenge.

“If it had been a tribute song, he wouldn’t have made it so easy to compare. I’m pretty sure he would’ve made it so there are just traces of Beethoven. But this song has the same performance time by part and the same number of measures. Even with Schiller’s Ode to Joy. It is an explicit challenge.”

“Did you know that in each part, the number of measures for the piano and violin are the same?”

“Yeah. It’s proof that he was targeting the Queen Elisabeth Competition. He’s taken the fact that the winners in both parts need to perform the winning song into consideration. Jun is so good it’s beyond expression.”

“He really is impressive. How could he make a song like this?”

“I’m surprised but it’s not novel. From the surprising things I saw when we were at school together, I knew he would do something great like this someday. Though I am surprised that his first try is Beethoven.”

They cannot just sit in admiration. They need to perform this perfectly within 10 days. There is not enough time.

“Let’s eat first and then start. I’m so hungry I don’t even have the strength to hold up my violin bow.”

They both thought that they would have to reduce the amount of time they spend sleeping from now on, and headed to the cafeteria.



There is a statement that has been most talked about in pop history.

It is in an interview with John Lennon from March 1966 that a female reporter conducted while investigating for an article titled ‘Beatles Mania Phenomenon’.

During this interview, John Lennon said that ‘The Beatles are more popular than Jesus’ and shocked the world.

The statement, “We’re more popular than Jesus now. We don’t know which is going to disappear first, rock and roll or Christianity.” was distorted while discussing the decline of Christianity in England after World War I.

However, the media hid John Lennon’s exact words and released articles. Articles with headlines of ‘The Beatles are Greater than Jesus’ hit America.

Radio stations declared that they would not turn on the Beatles’ music, and several concerts were canceled. There was a protest against the Beatles in Mexico, and Africa and Spain banned their music from radio broadcasts.

The Vatican also got involved and criticized John Lennon’s words. John Lennon’s official apology could not quell the controversy either.

Jun Hyuk’s statement was limited to Beethoven’s symphony and is from someone falling behind who is saying that he is catching up to Beethoven and not that he is better, but the media cited John Lennon’s statement to release the news. They used the same sentence, putting in Jun instead of the Beatles and Beethoven in place of Jesus. The headline that he is better than Beethoven covered the internet.

The competition committee quickly suspended the chaotic press conference and opened up an emergency meeting. In case of the worst situation, they need to make sure that the theater is not empty on the day of the competition.

“Couldn’t it be that we’re taking it too seriously? How could we think that it’s so absurd for a young musician to want to surpass Beethoven? Isn’t that everyone’s dream?”

“It wasn’t such a common meaning. ‘I’m in the scope to catch Beethoven!’ He said that he and Beethoven are at the same level. Really... It is a statement that people could definitely be averse to.”

“Aren’t we funny for having a meeting about such a thing? It’s a personal statement. Why does our committee need to make a big deal?”

The noisy meeting continued for a long time, but they decided not to give any comment or response.

As soon as the press conference was over, Tara reported Jun Hyuk's statement to President Isaac Stern. He laughed when he heard this and only told her to wait because he would personally get involved if a response was necessary.

President Stern was reassured that his eye had been precise. Each unintentional word surprises people, and he engraves himself in others.

President Stern was going to make an official statement that it was a misunderstanding created by the nuances between Korean and English, but he decided against it. Is there a need to make such a pathetic excuse with poor language? Jun Hyuk has already showed them enough that he can catch up to Beethoven.

He should not have to hide behind words but take responsibility. President Stern believed that Jun Hyuk would take responsibility for the things he said.



"Jun, that was a bit much. You underestimated Beethoven....."

"What are you talking about? Underestimated? Is that how you took it too?"

"I'm sure that's how anyone would have taken it."

Tara still had a darkened face in worry.

"Ha ha. I really have both my hands and feet up. What? Beethoven is in a category that you can catch up to? You said something so fearsome without hesitation."

Unlike Tara, Pierre Boulez no longer had the shock from the press conference and was enjoying the situation.

"But why are you taking out everything I said before that? I said that I could never catch up to the piano sonata."

"That's already been erased from memory. The words that came after were too strong. But is that really what you think?"

"Maestro, what do you think? Since you're already conducting my song, tell me honestly."

Pierre Boulez spoke without even the slightest pause,

“It’s plenty. When Beethoven wrote the choral symphony, he was over 50 years old. 20 year old Beethoven was just a punk who trailed behind Haydn. But you’re 20 and already competing with a song that Beethoven created in his later years. You lack nothing to catch up to Beethoven.”

Jun Hyuk blushed because he did not know he would hear such high praises said to his face, but Pierre Boulez did not show regard for this and asked about the first statement that Jun Hyuk made.

“But why do you think that you wouldn’t be able to surpass his piano sonata?”

“What surprised me most about his piano sonata was his ability to create a song with a simple motive. That technique of using one motive constantly, repeating and using it to form a dramatic nature. I can’t copy that no matter what I do.”

“Really? Even though there are a lot of pieces that were written with Beethoven’s 32 piano sonatas as subjects in various ways?”

“I can make songs at any time with different subjects. My personal view is that it is the essence of Beethoven to make a sonata with one motive.”

Tara however, did not hear the conversation because she was still encompassed in worry.

“Jun. I still think it was a mistake. The effect is going to be too far-reaching.”

“Tara.”

Pierre Boulez did not stop smiling, and turned to Tara.

“Yes, Maestro.”

“Don’t worry too much. Once the finals start, it’ll be deployed with a completely different video.”

“Excuse me? What does that mean?”

“Once Jun’s choral concerto spreads, his statement is going to be suppressed. There will be lots of different opinions. The choral concerto is another Beethoven. No. Though it’s great, it’s just a subtype of Beethoven. He can’t surpass Beethoven no

matter what. Mentioning Beethoven in the end means that they admit to Jun's statement. It'll become noisy like this."

"Oh, I see."

Tara quickly understood why Pierre Boulez was telling her not to worry. As large as the scandal is, there are more people who pay attention. While Jun Hyuk slips out in this situation, all that is left is the clashing of opinions.

Another criticism could become a more shocking opinion than Jun Hyuk's statement. There is nothing for Tara to do but wait for that moment.

Chapter 196

“Hey! Why did you talk like that?”

As soon as he picked up the phone, he could hear Yoon Kwang Hun yell. But the tone did not feel like a scolding. It felt like he was holding back laughter.

“Are you talking about the interview? You saw it?”

“Yeah. I saw it broadcast live on the internet. It’s crazy.”

“Well... The reporters asked relentlessly. It was annoying. So I just said what I was thinking... I don’t know why everyone is making such a fuss.”

When Jun Hyuk answered cautiously, there was yelling again. It was something he had not been expecting.

“Of course. You should have just done it. You can’t catch up with his piano sonata? Why so timid? You really don’t think you could?”

“No, I don’t. It’s a total uncrossable wall.”

“I don’t think so. You have quite a few piano sonatas that could easily be put up against Beethoven’s.”

“I can’t follow Beethoven’s way of using one theme to create a song.”

Jun Hyuk forgot that he was on the phone and shook his head.

“You still have a long way to go before you’re 50 years old. Work hard at it.”

Yoon Kwang Hun and the maestros who know Jun Hyuk well were applauding the situation with laughter and looking on with interest.

“Jun. I guess you are afraid of Beethoven? You have one foot in and one quietly pulled out.”

Jun Hyuk was exhausted from taking over 10 calls full of jokes.



While the internet was becoming more and more heated over Jun Hyuk's statement, Jun Hyuk was starting the first rehearsal with the vocal finalists.

The vocal soloists gathered around a single piano in order to practice just the solo parts. When Jun Hyuk entered the room, Laura was the first to welcome him.

"Jun. Congratulations on the win."

"Laura! Congratulations. It was the best performance. It'll be your time now."

"What are you talking about? It'll be the time of the new Beethoven. Ha ha."

Not surprisingly, it came up again.

"Whew – You saw the interview?"

"You think there's anyone who hasn't seen it? Where did that confidence come from?"

"No. That article was exaggerated."

They could feel the 5 other soloists' eyes on them and quickly stopped chatting, blushing.

Jun Hyuk quickly changed his expression, and bowed to the vocal finalists.

"First, congratulations on reaching the finals. And I apologize for having a personal conversation for so long."

Jun Hyuk hastily sat in front of the piano and spoke again to the 6 vocalists.

"You practiced yesterday with Maestro Boulez? Then forget everything that you felt during practice yesterday."

The finalists seemed to be a bit taken aback. The rumor was true. The rumor that the 2 conductors are performing with completely different interpretations of the song had leaked little by little through the orchestra.

“Of course, also forget Beethoven’s choral symphony. I’ll say it again, but it’s an entirely different song.”

As soon as Jun Hyuk spoke, a thick voice spoke up.

“It might be possible for the orchestra, piano, or violin, but it’s hard for singers like us to erase Beethoven. Isn’t the song we’re singing Ode to Joy?”

A male vocalist who entered the finals as a baritone looked a bit discontented.

“The lyrics are Ode to Joy but honestly, there isn’t much meaning to it. There wasn’t really anything else to put in, and I don’t write well enough to put in my own lyrics... But I kept the meaning of the first verse of the lyrics. I’ll tell you about this again later.”

The first verse of Beethoven’s choral symphony is not Schiller’s ‘Ode to Joy’. They are lyrics that Beethoven himself wrote.

“The important thing is the feeling you have while singing. You’ll know when you join the orchestra for rehearsal soon, but it is really aggressive.”

During practice yesterday, Maestro Boulez kept stressing ‘elegance’. It is ‘aggressiveness’ today?

“If I have to express it in one phrase, it would be like a war song.”

“War song?”

The baritone’s face became an expression of doubt. It is hard to find war in the first verse that Jun Hyuk had said was important.

“Yes. It’s not a song that is showing the joy of victory. The entire 4th part is in the midst of a battle. You are all warriors. You’re warriors who become excited at the sight of blood. That’s the kind of thought you have to have while singing.”

“Is it in symmetry with the 2nd part?”

Laura watched the other soloists and spoke cautiously.

“Why do you think that?”

Jun Hyuk's eyes flashed as he looked at Laura.

"I suddenly thought of it when you said that it's a battle. The 2nd part is the unrest of fugitives, or retreating soldiers? The fear of people being chased? I got that kind of feeling."

"Really? Did you get that feeling like practicing with Maestro Boulez yesterday?"

"No. Maestro Boulez said that the 2nd part doesn't forget humor. It was a completely different feeling and what you're saying is the feeling I got when I first saw the score."

Jun Hyuk felt like he had discovered another side of Laura. Regardless of the fact that she has enjoyed singing from a young age, it is a talent to be able to look at a score and figure out the composer's intentions at once, and not practice.

"So you're saying the 2nd part is retreat and the 4th is a battle?"

"It isn't? Did I get it wrong?"

Laura looked over Jun Hyuk's expression.

"Hang on. Before that, can you tell me what you thought of the overall flow?"

"What? Don't you have to tell us as the composer?"

"I just want to know how you took it. Everyone, tell me what you thought of the parts before, not just the 4th. There's no such thing as a correct answer, so please speak frankly."

As though they had been waiting to, everyone poured out their opinions but Jun Hyuk was only looking to Laura.

"Since you said that it's a battle... With the analogy to a battle, the 1st part is a fierce battle, the 2nd is retreat, the 3rd reorganizing the battle line, and the 4th is the final showdown. Something like this?"

"Reorganization? The 3rd part?"

"Yeah. But it doesn't seem smooth."

“Why don’t you think it’s going smoothly?”

“After the trombone in Andante Maestoso in G Major, there’s a viola with a dark and dismal atmosphere. Of course there will be individual differences, I felt an uncanny fear. They’re bracing up for battle, but there’s a dense fear of defeat. I think that the 3rd part is dominated by this kind of feeling.”

She is impressive. There is no doubt that Laura had a fierce battle with the score in order to come up with an interpretation like this. This ability to interpret must come from her sense of expression, that is easily comparable to that of star vocalists without falling behind.

Jun Hyuk however, hid these thoughts and urged the vocalists without mentioning it.

“You need to keep the emphasis on the change in the vocal and chorus part. I’m sure you all saw the score and already know, but there is *prestissimo* and then the speed is suddenly reduced to *poco adagio*. And then it’s *vivace* again. You need to handle this change in tempo well.”

Jun Hyuk looked at Laura again and continued with his explanation.

“The overall flow is as Laura just said. I only used the word ‘battle’ to express the vehemence. Lastly, it is about the first verse of the song I talked about first.”

Jun Hyuk quietly read the lyrics that Beethoven himself wrote,

Oh friends, not these sounds!

Let us strike up something more pleasant, full of gladness.

“Think of the sagging shoulders of the soldiers who are participating in the final showdown. Hoping they’ll have courage as they’re taking heavy steps toward death, but the foreboding that they can’t escape death. You need to express this complex state of mind.”

The baritone, who needs to sing the first verse, swallowed hard. Starting with a grim resolution instead of joy! It is the first time he is experiencing such a thing.

They finished their long discussion on the interpretation of the song, and Jun Hyuk played the piano. Everyone looked at their scores and created a beautiful timbre along

with the piano accompaniment.

Having lyrics could be the easiest way to express emotions. Happiness and sadness are relayed directly through words rather than a melody and rhythm.

But when they are told to deliver an entirely different emotion from the lyrics, it is only an interference. Furthermore, Ode to Joy is a straightforward narrative and not a metaphor. The vocalists try to express the resolution as per Jun Hyuk's demands, but they keep getting lost in the lyrics.

Before Jun Hyuk can saying something, the soloist realizes that he has not been able to bring out the emotion that Jun Hyuk wants, and often stopped the song.

"It'll be easier to experience it for yourself, won't it?"

After stopping a few times, Jun Hyuk looked mischievous.

"Let's try it out one at a time. First, Laura."

"Jun. What are you telling us to do?"

When Laura came next to the piano, it was evident from her expression that she was nervous.

"The same thing. Forget that it's a chorus and just think that you're singing an aria. The piano accompaniment is going to change, but don't worry because it'll match the song perfectly. Shall we start?"

Laura started singing on Jun Hyuk's signal, while the piano only picked up the simple chord. But when it slowly started becoming more complex, the other vocalists began to get nervous.

If it had been a battle where the piano and voice went back and forth, they would have been able to look on with interest. However, it was more like a scene from a horror movie where the beautiful protagonist is being chased. The surprised expression on Laura's face heightened this feeling as well.

When the song was over, Laura was in a cold sweat and the watching vocalists let go of their breaths.

Jun Hyuk took his hands off of the keys and spoke to the vocalists who had been watching instead of Laura.

“Alright. You all sang along silently while Laura was singing, right?”

Everyone had moved their lips and sang along silently. Is that not instinct for a singer?”

“Keep in mind what you felt while listening to my piano and Laura’s singing. That is exactly what I am asking for.”

Laura did not know the reason for Jun Hyuk’s words and looked over the expressions of the other vocalists. As soon as they realized that the performance just now was for them, they looked more surprised than Laura did.

“So shall we try it again?”

Jun Hyuk recalled New York Philharmonic’s Maestro Dimitri Carras. He had surprised Jun Hyuk by using the method of being objective to prepare the Inferno performance.

Jun Hyuk does not have time to tune the singers individually. He had thought of Dimitri Carras when he was thinking of how to tune these expressive people in one go.

When Laura sang the song herself, the tension she had felt was excessive. It had been to the point where her voice was crawling. However, Jun Hyuk watched the vocalists’ expressions and controlled the tempo and strength of the piano accompaniment to maintain the emotion he desired.

After a few practices, the singers were slowly tuned into the way Jun Hyuk wanted.

Chapter 197

“Did you memorize the whole score?”

“Of course. Thanks, friend. I think I know why you told me to memorize the whole score.”

“Then fine. You’re not having any issues either, are you Ms. Han?”

“No. I barely memorized the whole thing.”

Danny and Han Ye Ji arrived at BOZAR theater after being locked up in the Chapelle Conservatory for 8 days to prepare for the rehearsal with everyone excluding the chorus.

Their eyes were bloodshot and they looked thinner. But their expressions were bright. After completely memorizing the scores, performing became much easier. They do not know exactly why, but as soon as the score was imprinted in their minds, they did have the slightest hesitation.

On the other hand, the expressions of Jun Hyuk, the orchestra members, and the vocal soloists were not bright. They have a strong feeling that the rehearsal with the performers to go up on the first final stage did not go well.

Danny had a lot of questions he wanted to ask as he watched Jun Hyuk’s face, but he did not speak up. The first piece of news he heard as soon as he came out of Chapelle Conservatory was Jun Hyuk’s statement on Beethoven. He had intended to have a big laugh about it when they saw each other, but he could not joke around in Jun Hyuk’s current state.

They are not friends on stage. Jun Hyuk is the maestro who dominates the stage. The feelings of over 100 people can change with a single word from Jun Hyuk.

Jun Hyuk was at the podium with the piano on his right and the violin on his left. The vocalists need to wait in the back until the orchestra is done up to the 3rd part.

“Alright. We’ll start with the 2nd part.”

Jun Hyuk turned his head to both sides, met eyes with both people, and moved the baton with strength.

Beethoven's choral symphony is in a A-B-A 3 part format, but Jun Hyuk's concerto is continued through A-B-C-D and they head to the 3rd part without hesitation. When the strings were about to be expanded, the speedy piano began.

When the pianist's interjection was about to burst through, the violin created a harmony with its prominent fingering to let everyone know that the concerto had begun.

The orchestra created a bass with a *molto vivace* tempo while the violin and piano deployed counteracting reasoning. The vocalists were seated without roles and were in such excited states that their hearts beat as they listened to the fast tempo and continuing melody.

Since they are young enough to participate in a competition, they are not uncomfortable with the fast changes. The difference between reading the score and hearing the performance in person is the difference because the earth and heaven.

How many times had their blood boiled just from listening to some music? Their first thought was that Jun Hyuk's arrogant statement had not been all wrong. They do not know whether his work is comparable to that of Beethoven or does not come close to matching up, but it is comparable to the innovative and rampant feeling they felt when they first heard Beethoven.

Beethoven's Fate Symphony was also rejected at the time because it was considered too extreme.

The first audience for Jun Hyuk's choral concerto is going to have no choice but to agree that at the least, 20 year old Jun Hyuk is ahead of 20 year old Beethoven.



Jun Hyuk could not leave Palais de BOZAR until the competition was over. They could not even count how many reporters there were hiding out near the theater for subsequent coverage.

While staying in the temporary residence created for him from the theater, he was

constantly visited by the people he would need to stand on stage with. They came with their scores to ask about Jun Hyuk's interpretation and for advice on where they were lacking.

The finalists who would perform with Jun Hyuk were surprised by the novel image of him as a conductor over just 2 days. Unlike conductors they had experienced until now who had explained their interpretations, he had used music to help them understand at once.

If they explained their thoughts to Jun Hyuk for a while, he would respond with music. He played the piano without speaking, and the answer was inside that piano melody.

Tara on the other hand, was frustrated as she watched Jun Hyuk in this harsh environment.

"Jun. It's okay to go to the hotel. If we just use a few bodyguards, we can block the reporters. You don't have to stay here like this."

"It's okay. I feel more at ease here. I'm used to places like this."

Tara could not break Jun Hyuk's stubbornness, so she moved her own stay to a hotel near the theater. Every time the reporters saw Tara go back and forth between the theater and hotel, they shoved their microphones at her. But she only had one answer,

"Watch the performance for yourselves. Jun only said what he was thinking, and it isn't too late to make a judgment on that statement after listening to his music."

There would not have been so much noise if Jun Hyuk had been a complete rookie facing his first stage. No one would have paid attention to the situation, disregarding it as nonsense from an idiot who does not know anything.

However, he is the composer of hot topic Inferno and someone who received rave reviews from maestros. And because of President Stern, who moved quickly, many maestros were already able to receive Jun Hyuk's score. That assessment was giving him a great reputation among musicians as Inferno had. With this kind of situation, it seems like the chaos would continue for the time being.

Famous critics in Europe boarded planes and trains, and gathered to Brussels. They swept up all of the tickets to the first day of the competition as though showing that they are prepared to make a judgment on Jun Hyuk's statement.

Maestros who saw the score for the choral concerto also went to Brussels, full of expectations. They intended to watch Jun Hyuk's premiere and immediately go back to start preparing to put the song up on their own stages.

Contrary to the competition committee's concerns, tickets for the day Jun Hyuk would be conducting were sold out and the prices of scalped tickets surged. Even those were hard to come by.

More attention was coming to the Queen Elisabeth than there was to the Chopin Competition finals.



"What is this place? Are you spending your days reminiscing about past days?"

"Isn't it better than the little room I stayed in cafe in the beginning?"

Yoon Kwang Hun arrived in Brussels and went to BOZAR theater, where Jun Hyuk was staying, first. Of course, it is incomparably more spacious and pleasant than the small room in the cafe had been.

"Did you come alone? Didn't I send you 5 tickets? Who did you come with? Lawyer Baek? Teacher Jo Hyung Joong or Teacher Yoon Jung Su?"

"Oh, no. I came with my friends, but they went to look around Brussels since they're classical music manias."

Friends? Did he have friends who were willing to come this far? Jun Hyuk had almost never seen Yoon Kwang Hun meet up with his friends in all the time that they had been living together. There had only been the 3 or 4 college friends who had stopped by for the first time in a long time when it had been extremely noisy because of his participation in the audition program. Those people had not come again after that one time, and no one had come after.

But he cannot nitpick and ask what friends, and he does not want to go so far to find out.

Jun Hyuk's expression changed subtly, but Yoon Kwang Hun paid no mind.

“Anyway, are you confident?”

“Huh? In what?”

“Don’t you have to show that you have the possibility to catch up to Beethoven in orchestral songs tomorrow at the least? There are going to be a lot of people who are just waiting to rip you apart... I’m asking if you have the confidence to quiet them completely.”

“Won’t the people who resent me and are out to bring me down, do it regardless of what the performance is like?”

“It’s a success if you can change people like that. Music can’t lie.”

Jun Hyuk thought for a moment and spoke,

“Um. Tomorrow morning’s performance is going to be a little flat. The afternoon one will be pretty fun. I want to be judged on the afternoon one.”

“Why?”

“The 2 people competing in the morning aren’t that great. I tried to conduct the way I want and have them follow, but they seemed to find it difficult. I thought it’d be a disadvantage if we perform like that, so I matched it to them a bit.”

“Are you matching it to them because it’s a competition?”

“Whew. I couldn’t get myself to be harsh with them to their faces. Won’t it remain as a trauma forever if there’s a situation where they’re performing and can’t continue?”

Jun Hyuk could not forget the images of the female Japanese violinist, who cried while holding her violin, and the Australian pianist, who lost track of the beat and was devastated.

“Then the afternoon performance?”

“Han Ye Ji and Danny are performing, and it’s okay. They can follow along with ease, so I can give the performance that I want to give. And I’m sure Danny is going to win. He really improved a lot while touring.”

“Hm. Then should I skip the morning performance and go straight to the afternoon one? I really don’t like flat performances.”

“You’re too much. There’s going to be a different taste to the morning performance. Aren’t you putting too little faith in me?”

“Fine. But if it’s not worth listening to, I’ll be the first to pelt you with harsh criticism. He he.”

Yoon Kwang Hun told Jun Hyuk to work hard, pat him on the back, and went back to his hotel. He has work to do as well.



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